

**2003-2004 No Child Left Behind—Blue Ribbon Schools Program
Cover Sheet**

Name of Principal Mr. Sam Penceal
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Turtle Hook Middle School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 975 Jerusalem Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address)

Uniondale New York 11553-3099
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

Tel. (516) 918-1300 Fax (516) 505-2533

Website/URL uniondale.k12.ny.us E-mail spenceal@uniondaleschools.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

(Principal's Signature) Date February 4, 2004

Name of Superintendent* Dr. William Lloyd
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Uniondale Public Schools Tel. (516) 560-8824

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date February 4, 2004

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Ms. Patricia Kopystianskyj
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this package, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date February 4, 2004

**Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write 0 in the space.*

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

[Include this page in the school's application as page 2.]

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades K-12. (Schools with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has not been in school improvement status or been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's adequate yearly progress requirement in the 2003-2004 school year.
3. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, it has foreign language as a part of its core curriculum.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 1998.
5. The nominated school or district is not refusing the OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
6. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if the OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
7. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school, or the school district as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
8. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district: 5 Elementary schools
 2 Middle schools
 0 Junior high schools
 1 High schools
 _____ Other (Briefly explain)
- 8 TOTAL
2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: \$15,243
 Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: \$11,040

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
 Suburban
 Small city or town in a rural area
 Rural
4. 1 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.
 5 If fewer than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?
5. Number of students enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total	Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
K				7	135	112	247
1				8	126	140	266
2				9			
3				10			
4				11			
5				12			
6	110	124	234	Other			
TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL →							747

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the students in the school:
- | | |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| <u>2.6</u> | % White |
| <u>69.0</u> | % Black or African American |
| <u>28.0</u> | % Hispanic or Latino |
| <u>0.4</u> | % Asian/Pacific Islander |
| <u>0.0</u> | % American Indian/Alaskan Native |
| 100% | Total |

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 13.3 %

(This rate includes the total number of students who transferred to or from different schools between October 1 and the end of the school year, divided by the total number of students in the school as of October 1, multiplied by 100.)

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	31
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	69
(3)	Subtotal of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	100
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1	732
(5)	Subtotal in row (3) divided by total in row (4)	0.137
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	13.7

8. Limited English Proficient students in the school: 7.9 %
58 Total Number Limited English Proficient

Number of languages represented: 4
Specify languages:

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 41 %
307 Total Number Students Who Qualify

If this method does not produce a reasonably accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families or the school does not participate in the federally-supported lunch program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: $\frac{10}{76}$ % Total Number of Students Served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

<u> </u> Autism	<u> 1 </u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u> </u> Deafness	<u> 3 </u> Other Health Impaired
<u> </u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>68</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u> </u> Hearing Impairment	<u> 2 </u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u> 1 </u> Mental Retardation	<u> 1 </u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u> </u> Multiple Disabilities	<u> </u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

Number of Staff

	<u>Full-time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u> 2 </u>	<u> </u>
Classroom teachers	<u> 68 </u>	<u> 7 </u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u> 5 </u>	<u> 1 </u>
Paraprofessionals	<u> 1 </u>	<u> 8 </u>
Support staff	<u> 8 </u>	<u> 1 </u>
Total number	<u> 84 </u>	<u> 17 </u>

12. Average school student-“classroom teacher” ratio: 10:1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. The student dropout rate is defined by the state. The student drop-off rate is the difference between the number of entering students and the number of exiting students from the same cohort. (From the same cohort, subtract the number of exiting students from the number of entering students; divide that number by the number of entering students; multiply by 100 to get the percentage drop-off rate.) Briefly explain in 100 words or fewer any major discrepancy between the dropout rate and the drop-off rate. (Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates and only high schools need to supply drop-off rates.)

	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001	1999-2000	1998-1999
Daily student attendance	95.8%	95.8%	97.1%	96.3%	93.6%
Daily teacher attendance	95.3%	96.5%	96.3%	96.9%	93.4%
Teacher turnover rate	5%	8%	3%	18%	11%
Student dropout rate	0	0	0	0	0
Student drop-off rate	0	0	0	0	0

0=Not Applicable

Part III – Summary

Turtle Hook Middle School, located in Uniondale, New York, is a comprehensive, standards-based middle school consisting of grades 6 through 8. All stakeholders have a shared vision and mission to provide for the personal and academic development of each child. The overall goal of Turtle Hook and the Uniondale School District is to meet and then exceed the New York State mandated performance index levels.

Turtle Hook Middle School has implemented the “Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle Level Schools and Programs,” a research study released in the spring of 2000 by the New York State Education Department. Turtle Hook’s substantial yearly improvement of student scores on New York State tests is directly correlated to congruency with the Essential Elements.

Turtle Hook Middle School is committed to developing the whole child, intellectually and academically as well as personally, emotionally, socially and physically. The organization and structure of our school focus on teacher teams that utilize common planning time to maximize student development and deliver state standards through aligned curriculum and effective classroom instruction. A deep understanding of the state assessment system, learning standards, performance indicators and annual goals, along with a shared vision by all Turtle Hook staff, has resulted in the improvement of student achievement for the last five school years.

Turtle Hook’s educational program includes all the components of an exemplary middle school. Interdisciplinary teaming, advisor-advisee, exploratory and enrichment programs are fully implemented. Interdisciplinary teaming on each grade level assigns core teachers to the same groups of students. Five sixth grade two-teacher teams, two seventh grade four-teacher teams and two eighth grade four-teacher teams plan and deliver instruction. The mandated common teacher planning period allows for a greater response to individual learner needs through collaboration, increased parent contacts and creation of thematic units that increase relevance among the disciplines. A daily advisory program enables small groups of students to establish an adult advocate relationship with a teacher or staff member thus increasing feelings of belonging and self esteem that support increased engagement with learning. A full exploratory program exposes Turtle Hook students in the sixth grade to French and Spanish, computers, music, art, home careers and technology education. Enrichment classes address the ELA and math needs of the individual learners commencing at their specific instructional level. A multifaceted Academic Intervention Services (AIS) Program provides support for identified students that have scored below state proficiency levels. This program targets all students in need of remediation. Our More Able Learners (MAL) Program meets the needs of the talented and gifted students. Technology integration is evidenced throughout the entire school program. Turtle Hook has two mobile labs containing 16 laptop computers each, two computer labs, a library computer center and four to six computers in most classrooms. Starting in sixth grade, students become proficient in Microsoft Word, Internet research and PowerPoint presentations as an exit outcome to be applied in seventh and eighth grade programs. An accelerated foreign language program culminating in high school credit at the end of eighth grade has a success rate of 91%. A full intramural and interscholastic sports program, as well as extra-curricular clubs such as law club, chess, woodworking, art and jazz band plus a student government organization, further assists in the development of the middle school student.

Turtle Hook Middle School has realized a shared vision accepted by students, parents, administration and community stakeholders. Educators committed to young adolescents communicate high expectations of learning through the delivery of a curriculum that is standards-based. Classroom instruction is differentiated to meet the needs of all learners. Assessment of learning and evaluation of growth in student achievement is on going. A positive school climate exists focused on the development of the whole child resulting in improved student outcomes. The gains in student achievement have been reported in Turtle Hook’s New York State Report Card published each spring since 1999.

Part IV – Indicators of Academic Success

Question 1

The System of Accountability for Student Success (SASS), adopted by the New York State Board of Regents in May 2000, established the state standards for schools. To raise school performance statewide, the Commissioner of Education established an accountability mechanism to measure the performance of every student and each school in our state. Students at Turtle Hook and all other middle schools take the NYS ELA 8 and Math 8 assessments. The results for all students are reported as achieving a performance level score of 1 – 4. Level 1 students are not achieving at the state standard proficiency level. Students demonstrating some of the Learning Standards are at Level 2. Students demonstrating all of the assessed Learning Standards are at Levels 3 and 4. (Please note: Level 4 is mastery level performance, a score of distinction.)

Turtle Hook's yearly school performance, as well as all other New York State school test results, is summarized in the New York State Report Cards published each spring starting with the 1998-1999 school year to the present. The Commissioner established the School Performance Index in ELA and mathematics for all schools commencing with the first administration of the grade 8 ELA and mathematics assessment tests during the 1998-1999 school year. Each school's baseline performance was set as well as each school's performance of adequate yearly improvement of test scores. As a guide to understanding the Performance Index, New York State determines that “. . . the Performance Index may be understood as the sum of the percentage of students performing at or above Level 2 plus the percentage of students performing at or above Level 3.” A school's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) index is determined by New York State as a goal for bridging the achievement gap on the road to the attainment of the state standard index.

The results summarized on each Turtle Hook New York State Report Card illustrate definitively that our school has made substantial and significant progress in closing this achievement gap both in ELA and mathematics. Since the setting of Turtle Hook's baseline performance in 1998-1999, the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) index has been attained or exceeded for each school year including 2002-2003. The AYP projection from the school performance index of 120 in ELA from 1998-1999 was the attainment of 140 (state standard) for the 2000-2001 school year. Turtle Hook students achieved a 148 school performance in 2000-2001 resulting in the designation of a most improved middle school by New York State in ELA. The AYP projection from the school performance index of 69 in mathematics from 1998-1999 was the attainment of a 92 school performance in 2000-2001. Again our school achieved substantially higher by reaching 128 for the 2000-2001 school year. All sub-groups show improvement in achievement without statistical significance. Last year Turtle Hook Middle School was placed on New York State's Most Improved List in Mathematics and was awarded the Blue Ribbon for the 2001-2002 school year.

Limited English Proficient students are not required to take the NYS ELA-8 assessment because of insufficient proficiency in English. This ELA test is the only assessment from which these students are excluded. Fifty-eight Limited English Proficient students make up 8% of the school population. Limited English Proficient students at Turtle Hook are administered the state-approved Language Assessment Battery (LAB) that is utilized as the assessment to determine if these students are making appropriate progress in learning English. The scores from this test are sent to the New York State Education Department and are reported in Turtle Hook's New York State Report Card.

Part IV – Indicators of Academic Success
Question 2

Assessment data to understand and improve student performance comes from a variety of sources. The state school report card issued each spring is the baseline. Turtle Hook administers and utilizes student scores from the Test of New York State Standards (TONYSS) and local unit exams that are directly aligned to the skills and standards required by New York State. The Test of New York State Standards is administered in grade 5 (spring, prior to entering Turtle Hook) through grades 6 and 7. The 8th grade NYS ELA 8 and Math 8 are the state's intermediate assessments.

At Turtle Hook Middle School the monitoring of assessment data begins with the analysis of state-reported scores. Administration meets collectively to examine and disaggregate data. District level data analysis has directly resulted in programmatic decisions such as the creation of curriculum guides for teachers, adoptions of new math and ELA programs, and institution of after school Learning Academies for targeted students. Summer Learning Academies have been established for grades 6 through 8. Remedial instruction in both ELA and mathematics is delivered to targeted students determined by using data from the Test Of New York State Standards.

Data is disaggregated by teacher and individual learners. Item analysis correlated to each student begins with the development of diagnostic planning for skills development. The principal meets with each content team of teachers to assess data, identify student weaknesses and devise plans to address improvement of individual student performance. After each unit skills test and quarterly grades, teachers are required to specify student skills improvement in each area. During common planning team time, the principal and teacher team meet to review new data and analyze teacher predictions for individual student progress. The assessment specifications of Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 from New York State are utilized. Support teachers, special education and ESL teachers are included in the process at mandatory weekly full team and grade level meetings. Yearly goals are formulated to address deficit areas. As an example, last year disaggregated data from item analysis indicated that our students needed skills development in reading comprehension, specifically the high level thinking skills of making inferences and drawing conclusions. A school-wide program attacking this reading deficiency was coordinated throughout the grades and selected disciplines.

Part IV – Indicators of Academic Success

Question 3

Communication of student performance relative to the attainment of state standards begins with the administration and scoring of the Test of New York State Standards (TONYSS) chosen by the Uniondale School District as a predictor and skills level diagnostic assessment for students in grades 5 through 8. The test scores on all skills levels in ELA and math are recorded on students' permanent academic records. Printed scores are mailed home and are reviewed by the student, parent, guidance counselor and teacher teams commencing in grade 6. This is an annual process that continues in seventh and eighth grades. Final achievement levels are measured after the scoring of the eighth grade state assessments. Each student's yearly improvement and assessment data is utilized to formulate academic intervention plans, remediation and schedules.

Parent workshops on ELA and mathematics curriculums, standards and state assessments are planned and presented at key intervals during the school year. For example, comprehensive workshops in math and ELA were presented for parents in October and November 2003 prior to the administration of these mandated exams. In addition, a day-long program of parent workshops covering such topics as Helping York Child Achieve Success in School, Parenting for Violence Prevention, Parents Who Care (Relating to Your Teen, Identifying Risks and Reducing Them, Bonding With Your Teen, Being Involved), Building Self Esteem In Your Child and Succeeding As a Single Parent was offered in September 2003. The day began with a well-received keynote address by motivational speaker Paul Chandler from the Jackie Robinson Program. Plans are in place to repeat this program in the spring of 2004. The Turtle Hook Principal's Newsletter, published quarterly, informs students, parents and community of our school's progress and initiatives. Monthly PTA executive board and PTA parent meetings are a further source for defining data and progress. Strategies for parents to utilize with their children at home are disseminated at these workshops, at parent teacher conferences and through newsletter updates.

The principal of Turtle Hook Middle School holds a parent and community meeting each spring after the state report card for Turtle Hook has been published. PowerPoint presentations help parents to understand the performance of Turtle Hook students measured to the attainment of standards, overall school performance, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and student achievement at Levels 1 to 4. A school profile indicates grade range, count of teachers and staff, total per pupil expenditures and student enrollment. The entire System of Accountability for Student Success (SASS) is explained in depth. Copies of this state report are distributed to all stakeholders. Additionally, the principal of Turtle Hook presented "Middle School Initiatives to Improve Student Performance" for the Uniondale Council of Parent Teacher Associations (PTA). Assessment data (Levels 1 – 4), curriculums, supervision, staff development, learning academies and state assessment analysis are detailed. These initiatives include assessment data analysis, staff development planning and learning academies established with the goal of increasing student scores.

Part IV – Indicators of Academic Success
Question 4

The Uniondale School District has established an excellent partnership with many local colleges and universities. Hofstra University, located within the geographic boundaries of our school district, is a center of teacher and educational programs for our county. Regional and state meetings, workshops and conferences are hosted several times during the year. Turtle Hook Middle School, representing the Uniondale School District, plans to make presentations and lead appropriate workshops and seminars on the middle school level at Hofstra University and other educational institutions.

Staff development is an ongoing process for all school districts. We will contact school districts through their staff development offices and chief coordinators as to the availability of Turtle Hook presenter groups to share at their staff development day workshops. Contacts will also be made through the regional director of the New York State Middle Schools Association to schedule dates for presentations. On a local level, the Nassau County Principals' Association meets monthly to share collegial efforts and other information. Mr. Vincent Tumminello, our former principal, and Mr. Frank Farino, a sixth grade teacher at Turtle Hook, made a presentation to the Bridgehampton Public School District at a staff development conference last year. An administrative team has prepared information on the No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon Schools Program to disseminate at a future meeting.

Turtle Hook has a presentation committee in place in anticipation of being selected as a Blue Ribbon School again. Mr. Tumminello was chosen to make a presentation in Washington, D.C. in the fall 2003. The development of our presentation has prepared us for sharing our successes on a local, county, state and national level as detailed above.

Part V – Curriculum and Instruction

Question 1

Turtle Hook Middle School is committed to the supervision and evaluation of our academic programs by insuring the alignment of the written, taught and tested curriculum to the achievement of New York State Standards for all learners. Core curriculum mandated by New York State is required for each grade and serves as a foundation for the creation of the most up-to-date curriculum in all content areas. Curriculum guides for teacher use have been developed for middle school subjects. Turtle Hook teachers utilize daily individual lesson preparation and common teacher planning time to effectively design and create lessons. Curriculum guides contain scope and sequence charts, pacing charts aligned to state standards and performance indicators, charts demonstrating vertical alignment of units, vocabulary building lists and technology integration activities. These standards-based curriculum guides address all intermediate indicators for student achievement at mastery levels specified by New York State.

Delivery of instruction to insure that all students are engaged with significant content begins with the supervision of the taught curriculum from lesson design through assessment of classroom learning activities. Teacher lesson plans are evaluated and critiqued twice a month by the principal, assistant principal and district curriculum directors relative to standards alignment, modes of instructional delivery and adherence to curriculum guides. Classroom visitation reports are written from a student learning outcomes approach. They serve to monitor student engagement in curriculum learning activities. In addition to this process, a daily walk-through supervision model has been adopted. The principal visits all teachers daily so that a “snapshot” observation of learner-centered activities focused on curriculum implementation, effective teaching practices and usage of newly adopted instructional program materials can be assessed.

Course offerings for grades 6, 7 and 8 are described in depth in the Uniondale Public Schools Educational Opportunities book published each school year. This information is sent to all middle school parents and is carefully reviewed at annual student-parent meetings with guidance counselors. All middle school students’ plans for study include the core subjects: ELA, math, science and social studies; and special areas: home careers, technology education, music, art and physical education. A full exploratory and enrichment program is available to incoming sixth graders. Academic intervention, special education, English language learners and computer technology programs are provided on all grade levels.

Foreign language instruction begins in grade 6 with an exploratory program in French and Spanish. Sixth grade students study each language in introductory mini-courses. After this exposure and experience in each language, parents and students make informed decisions to select the language of choice for study in grades 7 and 8. Grade 7 begins the accelerated program in foreign languages for Turtle Hook students. In grade 8, upon successful passing of the New York State Second Language Proficiency Examination (SLPE), students receive one years’ credit in foreign language toward their New York State Board of Regents High School Diploma. Additionally, they are accelerated to Level Two coursework in ninth grade. At the end of the 1999-2000 school year, 85% of the students passed the SLPE. Four years later, at the end of the 2002-2003 school year, 91% of Turtle Hook students passed this proficiency examination.

Diagnostic assessments of delivered curriculum instruction monitor and measure student learning progress. These assessments take the form of TONYSS, unit and authentic assessments that are centered on skills development required by the state standards and are directly parallel to the format in which students will be assessed on the individual New York State assessments. The levels of student achievement are measured and reported to students and parents several times each grading quarter. The disaggregated data from these various assessments is the source of programmatic decisions utilized in curriculum development for Turtle Hook Middle School and the Uniondale School District.

Part V – Curriculum and Instruction

Question 2

Turtle Hook Middle School’s English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum has been designed so that the written plan, the delivered program, and the assessments are tightly aligned to the content and context of the New York State intermediate benchmark exam. The program, which is periodically reviewed and updated, uses varied and active instructional strategies that invite students to experience the educational and enjoyable powers of literature. The grade 6 through 8 program is organized into six themes. Each theme includes a variety of genres but also provides focus on one particular genre. Approximately 40% of the presented literature is non-fiction, a feature that aligns with the content of the current ELA 8 benchmark assessment. A pacing chart is in use for each grade level to ensure that the curriculum is completed in a timely fashion.

Students receive direct instruction on the use of reading strategies and engage in responsive reading, interpretation and literary analysis through encounters with a myriad of texts. Teachers utilize the four New York State ELA Standards to develop students’ abilities as readers, writers, listeners, speakers, viewers, and critical and creative thinkers. Instructional activities are based on the notion that reading is “transactional” – that is, a conversation between a reader and text resulting in the creation of meaning. Our program distinguishes itself by its use of active reading strategies and models that provide prompts to help readers engage in conversations with the presented material and each other. Response journals, drama and art support students as engaged readers who relate to characters and other story elements. Students analyze literary elements in tandem with using reading as a constructive act. Students are provided with opportunities to address specific skills through the use of “skill mini-lessons” and the use of an interactive reading handbook. This framework allows students to develop reading and vocabulary skills within the context of their literature study as well as to develop proficiency with key elements of the writing process, including grammar and style.

An Academic Intervention Services program is in place to address students who are one year or more below grade level in reading. This pull-out program is strategy-based and has broad application across different genres. The reading process is carefully addressed in these support classes and students are given structured models, guided practice, and reading tools required for growth.

Assessment is authentic and reflects what, how and why the curriculum is taught. Assessments are back-loaded and developed based on the construct designed by the New York State Education Department. They create opportunities for students to demonstrate growth, apply their knowledge, and reflect on their development as learners.

Part V – Curriculum and Instruction
Question 3

All stakeholders have a shared vision and mission to provide for the personal and academic development of each child. The math curriculum offers Turtle Hook Middle School students the opportunity to learn through a structured standards-based curriculum that is well defined in the *District's Math Curriculum Guides* for each grade level. This document contains a variety of instructional strategies built into a strong academic math program. To best meet the needs of all math learners, a teamed approach provides support as well as enrichment opportunities as math units of study are addressed. Common planning time affords the teachers the daily opportunity to focus and meet the individual needs of every student. At the core of the math program in the middle school is a tightly structured spiraling approach in which topics are consistently reviewed, enriched and expanded. In addition to interdisciplinary projects that are developed by the entire core subject team, the math teachers also have a scheduled time to plan for their grade level content lessons. They use this time to design activities that result in a hands-on learning environment, permitting every student to soar. The math curriculum contains the context and content of the New York State mathematics assessment embedded into the well-paced scope and sequence of the middle school math courses. As a result, Turtle Hook Middle School has moved from 19% of the students scoring at proficiency levels in May of 2000 to 80.3% scoring at proficiency in May 2003. We are focused on continued sustained improvement for all of our students as they are afforded the opportunity to learn through projects that simulate “real world” applications.

The math teacher delivers the curriculum with a focus on preparing the students for the format of the high stakes tests. An emphasis on writing in the content area provides the needed skills to answer extended response and performance-based assessment questions. Students are routinely expected to answer questions and support every answer with a rationale to defend their mathematical approach. Previously identified weaknesses in solving word problems have been addressed by the teaching of reading comprehension strategies during math lessons. Students receive additional support in remedial math classes that offer lessons designed to complement the material covered on a daily basis. Class size is limited to ten to twelve students. Classes are taught by teachers who are expert at presenting appropriate alternative teaching strategies that are compatible with each student's learning modality.

As a result of the mathematics initiatives that were implemented in September 1999, Turtle Hook Middle School was just designated by the New York State Department of Education to be on the New York State Most Improved School List in mathematics. Disaggregated data from this most improved list ranked Turtle Hook Middle School as the third most improved school of the 55 school districts in Nassau County for the 2001-2002 school year.

Part V – Curriculum and Instruction
Question 4

Turtle Hook Middle School’s instructional methodology is diagnostic and prescriptive in its approach to lesson design and delivery. Learning activities are student-centered and are rooted in middle level educational philosophy, addressing the various learning modalities of each learner. Teacher-designed lessons are modeled after the Uniondale middle school’s lesson plan outline that emphasizes cooperative learning, interdisciplinary strategies, technology integration and hands-on student-centered tasks. Differentiated instruction is employed to meet the needs of all learners at Turtle Hook Middle School.

Methodologies for classroom instruction are monitored closely by the principal and assistant principal within their roles as strong instructional leaders in a successful standards-focused middle school. Delivery of instruction emphasizes in-depth projects and learning that are tied to the standards and interdisciplinary units of study. Lesson activities are not centered on drill and practice, repetitive approaches or test preparation. Data analysis of the state assessment is the cornerstone of utilizing new initiatives in instructional methods that improve individual and school test scores.

A major emphasis is placed on increasing literacy – reading, writing, speaking, listening as well as critical thinking skills. Comprehension strategies are taught across the curriculum to enhance this effort. Language arts skills are infused in each subject area and practiced in each classroom. The blackboard configuration consisting of the homework, the “do now” and the learning objective written in measurable terms accompanied by several steps to be employed during the lesson is required in every classroom. Teachers are required to use verbs from the upper level of Bloom’s Taxonomy when writing learning objectives. The principal monitors unit tests and quizzes to ensure that inference questions and high level comprehension questions are included. The use of the writing process as taught by the ELA teachers is required throughout the various disciplines and reinforces this essential skill measured in the state assessment tests. Graphic organizers requiring students to gather, classify and organize information serve to further strengthen learning across the content areas. Turtle Hook students’ increased skills in making connections through graphic organizers have assisted in the sustained growth in student achievement. Varying and coordinating instructional methodologies by the teachers of Turtle Hook have contributed significantly to the improvement of student learning.

Part V – Curriculum and Instruction
Question 5

Turtle Hook Middle School participates in a multifaceted staff development program. Each staff member participates in three Superintendent Conference Days. The district goals established by the Board of Education determine the content of the workshops. The goals are based on the school report card, the disaggregation of assessment data and informal assessment measures. The principal, as the instructional leader of the building, in conjunction with the content area director, determines the workshop each staff member will attend. A recent district-wide staff development needs assessment allows teachers input in determining which staff development workshops meet their needs most appropriately. Workshops are organized so teachers work collaboratively in grade level groups to facilitate horizontal coordination or by departments to insure vertical articulation. Some workshops are lead by a person viewed as an authority in the field, especially when the content of the workshop is a completely new concept for the staff and the theory is being introduced for the first time. Some workshops are lead by resident experts. These are staff members who have grown professionally and have the ability to instruct colleagues in an area that needs to be incorporated in the instructional practices of his/her peers. The district may send staff members to receive training on theories, strategies or concepts that will increase teaching capacity. The staff members turn-key the information at workshops during superintendent conference days.

In the process of continued staff development, teachers are encouraged to participate in conferences to enhance their professional growth. Part of each faculty meeting consists of some time devoted to increasing the knowledge of staff on how to improve student achievement. Common planning time is incorporated into each teacher's schedule to provide opportunities for teachers to work together as a community to develop the continuity of instruction across subject areas and within the content area by grade level. The district has a professional library to support staff members' individual areas of professional interest. District in-service courses are provided as another avenue to increase teacher instructional capacity.

All district professional development opportunities are evaluated based on the Effective Components of Training. Evaluation of staff includes the ability of staff to transfer the knowledge learned at workshops, gained at conferences and acquired during independent research into instructional practices. Student achievement based on performance on tests is reviewed as the final evaluation to determine what is working and what is not. The results of this data are reviewed annually to determine the goals and the content of workshops for the next school year.

New York State Report Card for Turtle Hook Middle School

Middle Level School Performance

English Language Arts Performance of Students in Grade 8

	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
School Performance Index	123	148	142
School AYP Target	124		
State Standard	140	140	145
School Baseline	122	135	145
Count of Students	193	183	199
This school achieved the state standard for 2001-02.			

Mathematics Performance of Students in Grade 8

	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
School Performance Index	81	124	153
School AYP Target	80	92	103
State Standard	140	140	145
School Baseline	75	102	139
Count of Students	195	184	206
This school exceeded the state standard for 2001-02.			

**New York State Report Card for Turtle Hook Middle School
Middle Level
English Language Arts**

Performance at This School		Counts of Students								Mean Score
		Not Tested			Tested					
		AA ¹	ELL ²	Absent ³	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Total	
May 2001	General Education	0	14 8%	3 2%	6 3%	64 39%	72 44%	23 14%	165	709
	Students with Disabilities	2 13%	0 0%	0 0%	3 22%	8 57%	3 22%	0 0%	14	682
	All Students	2 1%	14 8%	3 1%	9 5%	72 40%	75 42%	23 14%	179	707
March 2002	General Education	0 0%	17 8%	0 0%	3 2%	108 54%	72 36%	17 9%	200	699.75
	Students with Disabilities	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	4 12%	26 76%	4 12%	0 0%	34	686.88
	All Students	0 0%	17 7%	0 0%	7 3%	134 57%	76 32%	17 7%	234	699.6
January 2003	General Education	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	5 2%	92 44%	87 42%	25 12%	209	697.75
	Students with Disabilities	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	6 17%	27 75%	3 8%	0 0%	36	674.24
	All Students	0	0	0	11	119	90	25	245	699.6
Grade 8 English Language Arts Levels – Listening, Reading and Writing Standards										
Level 4	These students exceed the standards and are moving toward high performance on the Regents examination. All students scoring from 760 to 882 are in this level.									
Level 3	These students meet the standards and, with continued steady growth, should pass the Regents examination. All students scoring from 716 to 759 are in this level.									
Level 2	These students need extra help to meet the standards and pass the Regents examination. All students scoring from 681 to 715 are in this level.									
Level 1	These students have serious academic deficiencies . All students scoring from 517 to 680 are in this level.									

Performance of English Language Learners (ELL)

ELL are students for whom English is a second language. Schools teach these students English so they can participate effectively in the academic program. ELL students without sufficient proficiency in English are not required to take the grade 8 ELA test. Their progress in learning English is measured, using standardized tests, and reported.

Grade 8	English Proficiency Below Effective Participation Level	Making Appropriate Progress
June 2002	15	2

- 1 For 2003, these students were eligible for the Alternative Assessment (AA). For 2002 and 2001, these students were exempt from this test because of disability as stated in their Individualized Educational Program.
- 2 These students are not required to take the grade 8 ELA test because they are English Language Learners (ELL) who performed below the 30th percentile on another appropriate English Reading Assessment.
- 3 These students were enrolled at the time of testing but were not present to complete some part of the ELA assessment.

New York State Report Card for Turtle Hook Middle School

**Middle Level
Mathematics**

Performance at This School		Counts of Students								Mean Score
		Not Tested			Tested					
		AA ¹	ELL ²	Absent ³	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Total	
May 2001	General Education	0 0%	0 0%	1 ½%	36 20%	74 41%	67 37%	4 2%	181	704
	Students with Disabilities	2 14%	0 0%	0 0%	1 7%	8 57%	5 36%	0 0%	14	710
	All Students	2 1%	0 0%	1 ½%	37 19%	82 42%	72 37%	4 2%	195	704
May 2002	General Education	0 0%	0 0%	1 ½%	21 10%	66 31%	105 50%	18 9%	210	721.5
	Students with Disabilities	3 19%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	4 25%	11 69%	1 6%	16	705.5
	All Students	3	0	1	21	70	116	19	226	721.5
May 2003	General Education	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	17 9%	46 24%	157 82%	9 5%	192	722.25
	Students with Disabilities	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	9 24%	10 27%	18 49%	0 0%	37	709.11
	All Students	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	26 11%	56 24%	175 76%	9 4%	229	722.25
Grade 8 Mathematics Levels – Knowledge, Reasoning and Problem-Solving Standards										
Level 4	These students exceed the standards and are moving toward high performance on the Regents examination. All students scoring from 760 to 882 are in this level.									
Level 3	These students meet the standards and, with continued steady growth, should pass the Regents examination. All students scoring from 716 to 759 are in this level.									
Level 2	These students need extra help to meet the standards and pass the Regents examination. All students scoring from 681 to 715 are in this level.									
Level 1	These students have serious academic deficiencies . All students scoring from 517 to 680 are in this level.									

- 1 For 2003, these students were eligible for the Alternate Assessment (AA). For 2002 and 2001, these students were exempt from this test because of disability as stated in their Individualized Educational Program.
- 2 These students are not required to take this test because they are English Language Learners (ELL) who perform below the 30th percentile on an appropriate English Reading Assessment and there is no test form available in their native language. Other ELL students must take this test, but may take an alternative language form if such is available.
- 3 These students who enrolled at the time of testing but were not present to complete some part of the mathematics assessment.