2004-2005 No Child Left Behind - Blue Ribbon Schools Program

U.S. Department of Education

Type of School: _X_ Elementary __ Middle __ High __ K-12

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

Official School Name: Abrams Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address: 600 Chiles Ave.
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address)

Fort Carson, Colorado 80913-5019
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County: El Paso County School Code Number*_____1334_____

Telephone (719) 382-1490 Fax : (719) 382-8572

Website/URL http://www.ffc8.org/abrams/ E-mail ebroadnax@ffc8.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.

_____ Date_____
(Principal's Signature)

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

District Name: El Paso County School District Number Eight Tel. (719)382-1300

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.

_____ Date_____
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson: Mr. Rod Ermel
(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.

_____ Date_____
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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 2004-2005 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 1999 and has not received the 2003 or 2004 *No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon Schools Award.*

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

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

1. Number of schools in the district:
   __6__ Elementary schools
   __2___ Middle schools
   __0__ Junior high schools
   __1___ High schools
   __1___ Other (Alternative High School)

   _10___ TOTAL

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: $ 5788.59

   Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: $5519.22

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

   [__] Urban or large central city
   [X] Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
   [ ] Suburban
   [ ] Small city or town in a rural area
   [ ] Rural

4. 4__Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.

   NA If fewer than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?

5. Number of students as of October 1 (2004-05) enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school only:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total		Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	16	12	**28**		**7**	NA	NA	NA
K	57	65	**122**		**8**	NA	NA	NA
1	55	59	**114**		**9**	NA	NA	NA
2	62	46	**108**		**10**	NA	NA	NA
3	54	52	**106**		**11**	NA	NA	NA
4	41	35	**76**		**12**	NA	NA	NA
5	37	31	**68**		**Other**	NA	NA	NA
6	NA	NA	NA			NA	NA	NA
			TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL →					622

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the students in the school:

50% White
21% Black or African American
20% Hispanic or Latino
05% Asian/Pacific Islander
04% American Indian/Alaskan Native
100% Total

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: ___16_____%

(1)	Number of students who transferred ***to*** the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	40
(2)	Number of students who transferred ***from*** the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	55
(3)	Subtotal of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	95
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1 (2003-04)	604
(5)	Subtotal in row (3) divided by total in row (4)	0.16
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	16%

8. Limited English Proficient students in the school: 4%
23 Total Number Limited English Proficient

Number of languages represented: 7
Specify languages: German, Khmer, Korean, Lakota, Samoan, Spanish, Thai

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 54%

Total number students who qualify: 256

10. Students receiving special education services: 12.86%
80 Total Number of Students Served

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

_2_Autism
_0_ Deafness
_0_ Deaf-Blindness
__0__ Orthopedic Impairment
__12__Other Health Impaired
__21__Specific Learning Disability

_1_ Hearing Impairment
_3_ Mental Retardation
_4_ Multiple Disabilities
_3_ Emotional Disturbance
__37__ Speech or Language Impairment
___0_ Traumatic Brain Injury
___0_ Visual Impairment Including Blindness

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

Number of Staff

	Full-time	**Part-Time**
Administrator(s)	2	0
Classroom teachers	32	0
Special resource teachers/specialists	11	1
Paraprofessionals	7	0
Support staff	5	0
Total number	57	1

12. Average school student-"classroom teacher" ratio: 19:1

13. Attendance Patterns

	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001	1999-2000
Daily student attendance	93.8 %	94.7 %	96.5 %	95.07 %	95.56 %
Daily teacher attendance	96.7 %	94.7 %	95.1 %	94.1 %	94.0 %
Teacher turnover rate	24.0 %	28.0 %	31.0 %	19.0 %	19 %
Student dropout rate (middle/high)	NA %	NA %	NA %	NA %	NA %
Student drop-off rate (high school)	NA %	NA %	NA %	NA %	NA %

PART III – SUMMARY

Parents Off to War

Abrams Elementary is not just your typical Title One public school. Even with constant military transitions and extreme war conditions, Abrams has managed to consistently increase achievement across the school and to also diminish ethnicity and gender achievement disparities. This little red school house is located on the Fort Carson Army Post at the south end of Colorado Springs, Colorado. Since the vast majority of the students and many of the staff are military dependents, enrollment is very unstable and sometimes quite unpredictable. Even though the average tenure of students is three years, recent events such as September 11 and the war in Iraq have caused drastic movements in families that are sometimes unexpected. To make matters even more challenging, many of the troops on Fort Carson lost their lives in Iraq. For these reasons, families feel stresses that filter into the lives of the children at school that affect emotional and academic performances. The mission of the school then becomes not only a place to learn, but also a safe stable haven in the times of trouble. Initially, the staff found it very difficult to close gaps in achievement; teachers were frustrated, moral was down and achievement declined on the Colorado State Assessment Program (CSAP) as indicated in Figure A. After an unnerving three-year decline in state scores from 1999 to 2002, and a change in school and district administration, the staff embraced the No Child Left Behind philosophy and began to teach Every Child Every Day with great focus and intensity. The difference: All students were expected to learn the same standards as quickly as possible without any excuses. During the 2002-03 school year, achievement began to drastically increase and stabilize for all students, without achievement gaps for different ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

Figure A: Abrams Historical CSAP Data of % Proficient/Advanced Students 1999-2004

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
3rd Gr. Reading	67	77	67	57	77	78
4th Gr. Writing	49	41	39	47	56	63
4th Gr. Reading	63	60	56	58	58	74

A School in Crisis

Under the new leadership of Dr. Precious Broadnax as principal and Mrs. Sue Freeburg as assistant principal in 2001 changes began to take place. The combination of scrutiny for declining scores, a new administration and the September 11, 2001 tragedy increased the pressure on the Abrams staff and the threat of reconstructing the school was imminent. The support and leadership of district superintendents Dr. Dale Gasser and Mr. Dwight Jones respectively, were crucial to the success of the school. For months the staff endured daily long waits at the gates, parking in distant lots far from the school and occasional searches at the door. Once the alert was lowered, there was hope of normalcy but the troops were soon called to war during testing cycles. Even so, student achievement began a trend of improvement in 2002 in practically every grade level on every assessment.

Closing the Achievement Gap

In 2001, overall student achievement was well below state averages, but by 2004 the students were outperforming their counterparts throughout the state. Not only did overall student achievement improve, but significant gains were made in closing or eliminating the achievement gap. Performance for all subgroups of students was uniformly high and significantly above the performance for like groups in Colorado. This is the story of Abrams Elementary School.

PART IV – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. One of the most significant indicators of success for Abrams was moving from a low to high rating on the 2002-03 Colorado School Accountability Report (SAR). This state report rates the performance of schools by the Colorado State Assessment Program (CSAP), which measures the academic performance of students [www.state.co.us/schools]. Abrams Elementary was rated Average on the SAR on 2002, but moved from the low to high range in this category, earning a "Significant Improvement" ranking in 2003 which was the highest in the school district in 2003.

Other indicators were evident from the 2000-2004 CSAP data. CSAP student performance levels are defined as "Unsatisfactory", "Partially Proficient", "Proficient" and "Advanced". For the purposes of this analysis, the following data is adjusted to match the United Stated Department of Education NCLB Annual Yearly Progress criterion as indicated by Figure C in the index.

Third Grade Points of Interest in Tables 1 and 5

- The reading performance of third grade students has steadily increased since 2001 in all areas and subgroups including males, females, ethnicities and free/reduced lunch students. The "At or Above Proficient" scores increased from 57% to 78% and rose above state averages.
- Gender: Females typically outscore males in reading, but at Abrams the third grade males and females have been closely aligned in "Above Basic" and "Proficient" scores for four years (2000-2004). The males even surpassed the females in "Advanced" 2002-2004 scores and all were above the state averages. In writing the scores are impressively equal in many cases.
- Ethnicity: Another surprising result in reading is that for four years (2000-2004) Blacks, Whites and Hispanics have acquired scores that are very similar with either the Hispanics or Blacks surpassing their White counterparts on occasion. For example: the 2000-01 Hispanic scores were 100% "At or Above Basic" which was higher than the other two and in 2001-02 and 2003-04 the Blacks scored higher. These scores are also higher than the state averages. Some of the same trends are also evident in the writing scores.
- Free/Reduced Lunch: Another pleasant surprise was that the Free/Reduced Lunch students are also beginning to score higher than the state averages. In reading 2002-03 the "At or Above Proficient" and in 2003-04 the "At or Above Basic" percentages were above the state averages.

Fourth Grade Points of Interest in Tables 2 and 6

- Fourth grade students have also had consistent gains in reading and writing for the past three to four years. From 2000-04 the "At or Above Proficient" reading scores increased from 56% to 74%, which is 18 percentage points. Writing increased from 27% to 74% over four years, which is a 46 percentage point increase.
- Gender: Continuing the trend of third grade, the fourth grade boys are consistently matching or surpassing the girls in reading and writing in most areas, and again these scores are also surpassing the state averages. For example, in reading 2003-04 all "At or Above Basic" and "At or Above Proficient" scores are above the state and the males and females are equal; no gap.
- Ethnicity Gaps: Again, the Hispanics and Blacks are higher or slightly different from Whites in reading 2002-04 and writing 2004 in "At or Above Basic" and "Proficient" levels. Impressively "Advanced" Blacks exceed Whites in reading 2004 and Hispanics have been consistently 100% "At or Above Basic" for three years, 2001-04. What A Fantastic Achievement!!
- Free/Reduced Lunch: In one area of 2002-02 and all areas of 2003-04 the Free/Reduced Lunch students surpass the state averages in the percent "At or Above Basic".

Fifth Grade Points of Interest in Tables3, 4 and 7

- Ethnicity and Gender Gaps: Some of the same trends are evident in the fifth grade data. In 2002-03 reading the "At or Above Proficient" scores of the Blacks were equal to their White counterparts. In 2003-04 the scores were within four points of each other. In math, the females have matched are passed the males for two years (2002-04) in the "At or Above Proficient" levels.
- Free/Reduced Lunch: In 2003-04 reading, math and writing, the students scored above state (89%).

2. Using Assessment Data to Improve School and Student Performance

Identifying Research Based Assessments

Frequent formative assessments are a central element of the Abrams teaching process because it is imperative that the progress of each student is consistently monitored by the teachers and administration. To achieve this, the following research and standards-based, reliable and user friendly assessments were identified: Accelerated Readers STAR electronic assessment, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and Tungsten Benchmark. Each of the assessments is unique in its own way and provides instant access to the evaluative data. STAR is an informal reading inventory that gives an approximate reading level, DIBELS gives indicators of levels for the five parts of reading and Benchmark indicates achievement of the various Colorado State standards. Teachers can monitor progress monthly and closely identify the needs of the students to adjust instruction.

A Paradigm Shift

The assessments are designed to monitor the success of the students and not for punitive grades. The teachers have embraced the paradigm that assessments drive instruction and indicate the needs of the students. This means that when students are found to not be performing, the teachers find avenues to improve or adjust instruction with best research-based practices to help the student to improve.

Alignment to Five Big Ideas

Another vital aspect of the assessments is that they are all aligned to the NCLB ideas of reading and the Colorado standards. Many of them also model the state assessment format which allows the students to learn the process during regular instruction. We monitor students for success and not for just grades.

Collecting Historical Data

Finally, the data helps to develop longitudinal and historical data that indicates school strengths and weaknesses. This data is collected by individual students, groups of students, individual teachers and grade levels. The administrators have immediate access to all electronic data for monthly monitoring of student achievement. Administrators and teachers consistently meet during common planning to discuss student progress and to pool information to improve achievement.

3. Communicating to the Public

Students

The Abrams staff recognizes the importance of establishing and maintaining open communication with all stakeholders of education. First of all the importance of achievement is communicated daily to the students by the statement of lesson objectives and their importance. These objectives are written daily on the board for easy observation. When students are able to understand the purpose of lessons, their achievement improves. Teachers discuss results of assessments with individual students and they work together to set goals and to help students monitor their individual progress.

Parents

The effect is even greater when parents are also actively involved in their education; therefore they are always invited to volunteer and visit the school. Prior to the first day of school, parents are invited to attend an Ice Cream Social, and an Open House a few weeks later, to meet the staff. Primary orientations are held in the spring with free “How To” books and “Get Ready” school supplies. Information nights are held in the winter prior to assessments to help parents get involved in the process. Daily notes on school purchased agendas, weekly progress reports and electronic mail encourage parents to help their children through classroom-based incentive programs. School state assessment results are published for the parents and community via monthly school newsletters and by district publication distribution and also on the district and school website. There is also grade level information about dates and times of various assessments. Parents also receive monthly benchmark reports and informal reading inventories reports that are reader friendly. They also offer explanations of the instructional levels of their children and also

suggestions for home involvement. Quarterly school-wide parent/teacher conferences are conducted over a three day period that includes evening and morning sessions to accommodate the working parents.

Community

On a larger scale, Abrams and the Fountain-Fort Carson District have conducted parent information nights that allow the parents opportunities to learn about different teaching practices and school initiatives. Also, the school district offers more in-depth community meetings that involve establishing the visions, goals and accomplishments of the district. Superintendent Dwight Jones and his staff develop strategic district planning sessions in an open forum format that are inviting and insightful. This information is formally disseminated throughout the district via newspapers, district publications and the State Accreditation Report. Other information is also disseminated throughout the community by the involvement of the school administration and counselor's participation in family forums, post committees, and organization that are specific to the military dependents. Abrams works very closely with the military educational liaisons by attending meetings to share information.

4. Sharing the Abrams Story

The successes of the Abrams staff have opened several opportunities to share with the district, community, state and even representatives from other states. The administration and some of the staff are actively engaged in public presentations that include samples of written materials for resources. Dr. Broadnax serves on the Colorado Department of Education Coalition to Close the Achievement Gap for the past two years. She also shared her successes with the Black Leadership Forum, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Colorado Springs Urban League, the University of CO at Colorado Springs and other various organizations in the community. She has been featured and quoted in the *Denver Post*, *Rocky Mountain News*, the *Colorado Springs Gazette and the Fountain Valley News*. The school was also recognized personally by Governor Owens in his State of the State Address 2005 for success in drastically raising achievement during adverse war times.

Dr. Broadnax and Assistant Principal Freeburg have also presented to other administrators at the district level and by the special request of Mrs. Wilson, the wife of Commanding General Wilson of Fort Carson, Colorado, and also presented at the National Military Child Coalition Summit in August of 2004 in Colorado Springs. As one of only five schools selected from the state, the teachers and Dr. Broadnax were invited to present at the Colorado Department of Education Literacy Summit. The PowerPoint presentation for this summit entitled *Beating the Odds* can be accessed at www.state.co.us/schools . Because of the successes of the school, several of the staff members of Abrams have been asked to present at the district and state as trainers for multi-sensory, Step Up to Writing, Six Traits, Lindamood-Bell, autism and DIBELS. Multi-sensory approaches involve the use of all five senses to learn to read.

Future plans include locally publishing the results of current Abrams action research and to add more staff to the list of trainers. The Abrams staff enjoys sharing their story as well as the visits from colleagues and friends.

PART V – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. ***Abrams Curriculum***

Philosophy: The entire curriculum is based on the Colorado State Standards for the various disciplines. All materials and resources were selected according to how well they aligned to the specific standards. Because there are no perfect matches, teachers supplement when appropriate. Effectiveness of any curriculum is determined by the quality of the teachers' instructional strategies. Therefore, the school uses the same basic core curriculums to ensure a level of curricular consistency across the K-5 grade levels. Best research-based practices are consistently monitored by the administration through daily observations and feedback to teachers. Grade levels plan and design lessons together to maximize knowledge.

Reading: The core basis of the Abrams reading curriculum is centered around the Five Big Ideas of

reading identified by the National Reading Panel: vocabulary, comprehension, phonic awareness, phonics, and fluency. With this in mind, only those resources that supported the ideas were strategically selected. This included the Open Court reading series as the basic foundation and a leveled-book reading library with hundreds of titles in various fiction and non-fiction genres. Open Court was chosen because the literature selections include a wide variety of recent award winning excerpts that address many ethnicities and also support strategies for the five big ideas of reading.

Math: Every Day Math was chosen as the school foundation because it very effectively addresses the Colorado Math Standards from a conceptual approach. Students are taught to understand the concepts of math and to think through many problem solving techniques. These concepts consistently spiral, or repeat, so that students are given many chances to learn them. Basic facts and computation skills are emphasized with games and graphic organizers.

English/Writing: Staff recognized that students needed a consistent approach to learning grammar. Abrams adopted the Houghton Mifflin Language textbooks because of the strong emphasis on organization, trait-writing as well as grammar. To more adequately address the organization of writing, Step Up to Writing was implemented across the school as an initiative. This technique is based on a formulaic approach to writing that uses graphic organizers and color codes to help students understand the basics of writing. Research-based combination of trait and formulaic writing has proved to be effective tools for the students at Abrams.

Social Studies/Science: All grade levels use current Science and Social Studies resources during literacy block as well as other class times. The school initiative is to directly integrate these subjects as much as possible and at least three times weekly. Academic field trip experiences are required in these areas for every grade level.

Music, Physical Education, Computer Technology, Library: All K-5 students are offered weekly classes in these areas. Students sing, read music, and learn to play a variety of instruments. Instruments were purchased to be loaned to students without a fee. Mr. Stinson, the P.E. teacher, also conducts alternative courses for the severely disabled and enrichment activities before and after school. In the Running Club, one student was recognized in the Junior Olympic Competition. A state of the art computer lab includes 30 computers and interactive boards for instruction that can be linked to everything from music to math. The librarian is a certified elementary teacher that integrates all curriculums.

Art: We are extremely proud of our Art program that is offered weekly to all K-5 students and also as enrichment after school. Students participate in standards-based and age appropriate projects that range from painting to pottery. The artistic abilities of the students have been displayed in the Colorado Springs Airport, at the Fine Arts Center and several other local establishments. Our award winning art teacher, Mrs. Debra Jones, manages to instill her passion and talent into the hearts of the students and has helped many of them win local recognition and awards. She has been instrumental in painting several murals on the school walls to enhance a positive ambience within the school.

Gifted and Talented: All students are encouraged to excel above the norm through reading, writing, math and spelling competitions. Advanced (gifted) and enrichment classes are open for all children willing to excel in reading and math.

2a. ***Abrams Elementary Reading Curriculum***

The reading curriculum is based on the five big ideas of reading: phonemic awareness, comprehension, fluency, phonics, and vocabulary, which is in conjunction with the specific skills indicated in the frameworks of the Colorado State Standards and the Colorado State Literacy grade level checklists. Through explicit daily direct instruction for a minimum of 1.5 hours daily, teachers focus on mini-lessons specific to objectives such as phonemic awareness, main idea, inferencing, predicting or identifying text evidence. To ensure that best practices are implemented, the K-2 teachers have been trained to use various multi-sensory approaches. Other approaches include meta-cognition techniques that teach students to think about their thinking. One way this is done is by introducing lessons with the objective so that students will know what and why they are learning the information. Another crucial element of the Abrams reading curriculum is progress monitoring. Along with weekly unit assessments, progress is

monitored bi-monthly with research-based assessments such as the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS), Accelerated Reader STAR, or the Tungsten Benchmark. DIBELS gives the teachers avenues to quickly assess the students in the five big ideas. STAR is an electronic informal reading assessment; and Benchmark is an electronic assessment aligned with the Colorado State reading standards. Intermediate teachers in grades 3-5 are trained in higher level thinking skills such as compare/contrast, categorizing and inferencing. All teachers use a variety of graphic organizers and visual supports.

Because of generous Title One and Read to Achieve Grants, Abrams is rich in research-based resources that support the standards-based curriculum. They may choose from the Open Court Basal series, an extensive leveled book reading lab, a well stocked library, Scott-Foresman Science, and a current Social Studies series. Along with current resources, the teachers team together and divide students into flexible skills groups to individualize the needs of students. Flexible means that students are moved between groups as needed.

3. Other Effective Curricular Practice: The Abrams Writing Project and Every Day Math

In his 2005 State of the State Address, Governor Owens acknowledged the 136 % increase of the fourth graders at Abrams from 1998-2004. We attribute these gains to the Abrams Writing Project. In 2001, it was noted that the school's writing curriculum was extremely weak and test scores were very low. The fourth grade teachers embarked on a action research project that involved improving the writing of students by balancing how the children wrote (the process) with the final composition (the product). With consistent instruction in Step Up to Writing and Six Traits, student began to improve. As an initiative of the school, all grade levels began to teach essay writing for at least one hour daily with an extra block of grammar instruction. To develop an authentic audience for the compositions of all students, the writings of every child from preschool to kindergarten are posted to create Walls that Talk. To strengthen the writing initiative, intensive professional development was offered to the staff to create teacher leaders. After completing the required classes, teacher trainers began to coach and train other staff members to help maintain the school writing focus.

Since math was another area of weakness in 2001, the staff chose Every Day Math for kindergarten through fifth grade. This program was initially chosen because of its strong correlation to the Colorado math standards, but it also has other perks that are important to the highly transient Abrams population. Because students are constantly moving in and out, it is important that skills are continually addressed and reviewed throughout the school year. It is also important that students learn problem solving and conceptual skills that will support them throughout their educational careers. A math resource that would support the consistent spiraling or reteaching of concepts was necessary. Every Day Math met the needs of the school. Consistent improvement of scores in all grade levels is evidence of its effectiveness.

4. Improving Instruction through Research Based Practices

The following instructional practices are implemented as school-wide initiatives and are consistently monitored by the administration:

Frequent progress monitoring: Teachers continually assess students for progress with formal and informal methods. Reliable Colorado State Standards based electronic assessments have been the most useful because they are user-friendly, quick and reliable. This is also the most efficient method to track Annual Yearly Progress for each student.

Assessments drive instruction: All grade levels meet weekly to discuss the progress of the students and to adjust instruction. The administration monitors individual progress and meets with teachers consistently.

Curricular alignment: It is very important to identify what students need to know, when they need to know it, who needs to know it and what to do next. Teachers explicitly design instruction to Colorado standards.

Flexible skills grouping: Students are placed in skills groups according to their individual needs. This is powerful because teachers team together to plan and discuss the best approaches to meet individual student needs from the most advanced to the disadvantaged students.

Teacher tutoring: Approximately one half of the teachers provide extra tutoring for underachieving students before, after and sometimes during school planning time.
Direct explicit instruction: All teachers provide extensive direct instruction during the school day. Skills are not assumed but taught explicitly. This initiative is closely monitored by the administration.
Team teaching/coaching: Teachers plan together. Resource teachers teach with general education teachers during the literacy block.
Multi-sensory & Phonics: All primary and resource teachers are expected to use multi-sensory and phonemic awareness approaches to reading daily.
Uninterrupted block-time instruction: The Literacy block is a minimum of 1.5 hours a day for each grade level.
Graphic Organizers: An Abrams initiative is that every teacher is expected to use many visuals aids and graphic organizers during instruction.
Authentic Audiences: Abrams uses Walls that Talk and Academic Contests in reading, math and spelling as authentic audiences to motivate students to be proud of their achievements.

5. *Improving Instruction through Professional Development*

To improve student achievement, teachers need time, tools and effective techniques. Once the daily schedule was adjusted to common planning time and the resources were purchased, professional development was implemented in these areas: reading, math, writing, assessments and data analysis. Initially, all staff learned the specific curricular initiatives such as Six Traits, Every Day Math and Open Court Reading. The philosophy of the school is that everyone knows and teaches the same basic concepts from preschool to fifth grade. Professional development in each area was consistent throughout the school year so that teachers were exposed over and over again. The administration frequently monitored the implementation of the concepts and established the best practices as school initiatives. Lead teachers in each grade level were identified to become trainers in the specific areas with task of coaching other teachers. This built the school's leadership density and empowered teachers to continue the various implementations. Our coaching model is powerful because when teachers combine their classes together, the lead teacher teaches the students while teaching the teacher the techniques and there is no interruption of instruction.

Assessment for Monitoring

The entire concept of teaching to mastery switched teachers from the "grading" to "attainment" mentality. To do this, teachers needed to learn how to assess more efficiently and learn what to do with the assessments. Professionals on assessment were retained for the staff to teach them how to adequately assess for meaning. Once the assessments were in place, professional development on analyzing data was necessary. This switch in paradigms was the catalyst to improving achievement. By looking at the data, the facts were obvious and subjective judgment was lost. The brutal truth of who and what improves achievement was evident and the teachers began to "want" to make a difference and to not just give grades.

Impact on Improving Student Achievement

The impact has been phenomenal. One outcome was the desire to know what children needed to know and then how to best teach them. This prompted the next generation of professional development to educate the staff on the Colorado standards and the grade level expectations. The natural evolution was to teach teachers how to best teach to the standards (i.e., multi-sensory approaches). Teachers are more confident in what they are teaching and assessing students for progress and not just grades because they feel that they can make a difference in students. If there is little or no progress in a student, the teachers team together to pool ideas and to change strategies.

Appendix

Figure C
Comparison of Proficiency Rating Descriptions between CSAP, NCLB & Data Tables 1-7

CSAP	*NCLB*	*Tables 1-7*
• Unsatisfactory	• Basic	
• Partially Proficient	• Proficient	• At or Above Basic
• Proficient	• Proficient	• At or Above Proficient
• Advanced	• Advanced	• Advanced

Table 1: 2000-2004 CSAP Third Grade Historical Reading (See Figure C)

	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001
SCHOOL SCORES				
% At or Above Basic	93	90	91	96
% At or Above Proficient	78	77	57	67
% At Advanced	6	8	6	4
Number of students tested	67	110	102	95
Percent of total students tested	100	99	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	4	0	3	NA
Percent of students alternatively assessed	6	0	3	NA
SUBGROUP SCORES				
1.Males				
% At or Above Basic	95	91	90	93
% At or Above Proficient	79	79	56	65
% At Advanced	8	12	4	5
Number of students tested	38	57	48	43
2.Females				
% At or Above Basic	90	89	92	98
% At or Above Proficient	76	75	59	69
% At Advanced	3	4	6	4
Number of students tested	29	53	51	52
3.Black				
% At or Above Basic	94	91	93	90
% At or Above Proficient	81	81	54	55
% At Advanced	0	3	7	0
Number of students tested	16	32	28	20
4.White				
% At or Above Basic	90	90	91	96
% At or Above Proficient	83	76	64	74
% At Advanced	10	12	7	7
Number of students tested	30	59	55	57
5. Hispanic				
% At or Above Basic	92	85	87	100
% At or Above Proficient	71	64	40	62
% At Advanced	7	7	0	0
Number of students tested	14	14	15	13
6. Free/Reduced Lunch				
% At or Above Basic	88	80	NA	NA
% At or Above Proficient	80	67	NA	NA
% At Advanced	5	7	NA	NA
Number of students tested	40	45	NA	NA
STATE SCORES				
% At or Above Basic	92	93	91	92
% At or Above Proficient	74	74	72	72
% At Advanced	8	10	11	10

Table 2: 2000-2004 CSAP Fourth Grade Historical Reading (See Figure C)

	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001
SCHOOL SCORES				
% At or Above Basic	97	90	89	84
% At or Above Proficient	74	58	58	56
% At Advanced	3	8	3	2
Number of students tested	65	106	79	85
Percent of total students tested	100	99	99	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	3	1	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	3	1	0
SUBGROUP SCORES				
1.Males				
% At or Above Basic	97	91	94	79
% At or Above Proficient	74	58	59	53
% At Advanced	0	4	6	2
Number of students tested	31	67	32	43
2.Females				
% At or Above Basic	97	87	86	88
% At or Above Proficient	74	59	60	59
% At Advanced	6	13	0	0
Number of students tested	34	39	43	41
3.Black				
% At or Above Basic	100	83	88	69
% At or Above Proficient	73	59	53	38
% At Advanced	7	3	0	0
Number of students tested	15	29	17	16
4.White				
% At or Above Basic	95	90	91	89
% At or Above Proficient	72	60	61	62
% At Advanced	3	10	4	4
Number of students tested	39	58	46	47
5.Hispanic				
% At or Above Basic	100	100	91	87
% At or Above Proficient	75	64	64	67
% At Advanced	0	7	0	0
Number of students tested	8	14	11	15
6.Free/Reduced Lunch				
% At or Above Basic	100	84	NA	NA
% At or Above Proficient	71	45	NA	NA
% At Advanced	6	2	NA	NA
Number of students tested	31	44	NA	NA
STATE SCORES				
% At or Above Basic	89	88	87	87
% At or Above Proficient	63	63	61	63
% At Advanced	5	7	6	7

Table 3: 2000-2004 CSAP Fifth Grade Historical Reading (See Figure C)

	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001
SCHOOL SCORES				
% At or Above Basic	94	88	86	89
% At or Above Proficient	63	61	63	58
% At Advanced	6	5	7	6
Number of students tested	62	84	94	88
Percent of total students tested	98	99	99	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	1	0	NA
Percent of students alternatively assessed	3	1	0	NA
SUBGROUP SCORES				
1.Males				
% At or Above Basic	92	80	74	92
% At or Above Proficient	64	58	42	53
% At Advanced	5	5	0	4
Number of students tested	39	40	53	49
2.Females				
% At or Above Basic	96	95	92	86
% At or Above Proficient	61	64	60	65
% At Advanced	9	5	0	8
Number of students tested	23	44	40	37
3.Black				
% At or Above Basic	80	86	67	78
% At or Above Proficient	53	64	28	44
% At Advanced	7	5	0	4
Number of students tested	15	22	18	27
4.White				
% At or Above Basic	97	90	96	94
% At or Above Proficient	71	64	62	60
% At Advanced	9	4	0	9
Number of students tested	35	50	47	47
5. Hispanic				
% At or Above Basic	88	78	79	90
% At or Above Proficient	63	56	43	80
% At Advanced	0	11	0	0
Number of students tested	8	9	14	10
6. Free/Reduced Lunch				
% At or Above Basic	94	80	NA	NA
% At or Above Proficient	52	49	NA	NA
% At Advanced	3	5	NA	NA
Number of students tested	31	41	NA	NA
STATE SCORES				
% At or Above Basic	89	87	86	88
% At or Above Proficient	69	66	63	64
% At Advanced	9	8	7	8

Table 4: 2000-2004 CSAP Fifth Grade Historical Math (See Figure C)

	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001
SCHOOL SCORES				
% At or Above Basic	94	92	81	87
% At or Above Proficient	65	51	47	45
% At Advanced	24	23	5	9
Number of students tested	62	84	94	67
Percent of total students tested	98	99	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	1	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	3	1	0	0
SCHOOL SUBGROUP SCORES				
1.Males				
% At or Above Basic	92	90	79	92
% At or Above Proficient	67	53	51	54
% At Advanced	31	30	4	13
Number of students tested	39	40	53	39
2.Females				
% At or Above Basic	96	93	87	79
% At or Above Proficient	61	50	42	32
% At Advanced	13	16	8	4
Number of students tested	23	44	38	28
3.Black				
% At or Above Basic	87	86	62	67
% At or Above Proficient	53	50	33	38
% At Advanced	20	14	0	5
Number of students tested	15	22	21	21
4.White				
% At or Above Basic	97	94	88	97
% At or Above Proficient	80	58	53	46
% At Advanced	29	30	4	9
Number of students tested	35	50	49	35
5. Hispanic				
% At or Above Basic	75	77	86	100
% At or Above Proficient	50	33	43	67
% At Advanced	25	11	14	17
Number of students tested	8	9	14	6
6. Free/Reduced Lunch				
% At or Above Basic	90	90	NA	NA
% At or Above Proficient	50	38	NA	NA
% At Advanced	20	15	NA	NA
Number of students tested	30	39	NA	NA
STATE SCORES				
% At or Above Basic	89	88	88	86
% At or Above Proficient	59	56	55	51
% At Advanced	22	20	20	13

Table 5: 2000-2004 CSAP Third Grade Historical Writing (See Figure C)

	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001
SCHOOL SCORES				
% At or Above Basic	97	97	98	NA
% At or Above Proficient	43	58	34	NA
% At Advanced	10	19	2	NA
Number of students tested	68	108	102	NA
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	NA
Number of students alternatively assessed	4	0	3	NA
Percent of students alternatively assessed	6	0	3	NA
SUBGROUP SCORES				
1.Males				
% At or Above Basic	97	96	98	NA
% At or Above Proficient	42	50	33	NA
% At Advanced	13	15	2	NA
Number of students tested	38	54	48	NA
2.Females				
% At or Above Basic	97	98	98	NA
% At or Above Proficient	43	67	37	NA
% At Advanced	7	22	2	NA
Number of students tested	30	54	51	NA
3. Black				
% At or Above Basic	100	97	100	NA
% At or Above Proficient	25	66	29	NA
% At Advanced	0	14	0	NA
Number of students tested	16	29	28	NA
4.White				
% At or Above Basic	97	98	100	NA
% At or Above Proficient	55	55	39	NA
% At Advanced	21	22	4	NA
Number of students tested	29	60	54	NA
5. Hispanic				
% At or Above Basic	87	93	87	NA
% At or Above Proficient	40	50	27	NA
% At Advanced	7	21	0	NA
Number of students tested	15	14	15	NA
6. Free/Reduced Lunch				
% At or Above Basic	100	96	NA	NA
% At or Above Proficient	50	44	NA	NA
% At Advanced	8	11	NA	NA
Number of students tested	26	45	NA	NA
STATE SCORES				
% At or Above Basic	93	94	93	NA
% At or Above Proficient	52	57	51	NA
% At Advanced	12	16	8	NA

Table 6: 2000-2004 CSAP Fourth Grade Historical Writing (See Figure C)

	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001
SCHOOL SCORES				
% At or Above Basic	97	94	96	86
% At or Above Proficient	74	56	47	27
% At Advanced	3	13	8	0
Number of students tested	65	106	79	85
Percent of total students tested	100	99	99	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	3	1	1
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	2	1	1
SUBGROUP SCORES				
1.Males				
% At or Above Basic	97	96	94	81
% At or Above Proficient	74	51	44	21
% At Advanced	0	9	13	0
Number of students tested	31	67	32	43
2.Females				
% At or Above Basic	97	92	100	90
% At or Above Proficient	74	64	51	32
% At Advanced	6	21	5	0
Number of students tested	34	39	43	41
3.Black				
% At or Above Basic	100	90	88	87
% At or Above Proficient	73	52	47	13
% At Advanced	7	10	0	0
Number of students tested	15	29	17	16
4.White				
% At or Above Basic	95	95	100	89
% At or Above Proficient	72	53	48	28
% At Advanced	3	17	13	0
Number of students tested	39	58	46	47
5. Hispanic				
% At or Above Basic	100	100	100	80
% At or Above Proficient	63	79	36	47
% At Advanced	0	7	0	7
Number of students tested	8	14	11	15
6. Free/Reduced Lunch				
% At or Above Basic	100	93	NA	NA
% At or Above Proficient	71	48	NA	NA
% At Advanced	6	5	NA	NA
Number of students tested	31	44	NA	NA
STATE SCORES				
% At or Above Basic	89	91	92	87
% At or Above Proficient	63	52	50	38
% At Advanced	5	10	8	2

Table 7: 2000-2004 CSAP Fifth Grade Historical Writing (See Figure C)

	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001
SCHOOL SCORES				
% At or Above Basic	96	96	94	N/A
% At or Above Proficient	63	48	46	N/A
% At Advanced	8	4	2	N/A
Number of students tested	61	84	94	N/A
Percent of total students tested	100	99	99	NA
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	0	0	NA
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	0	0	NA
SUBGROUP SCORES				
1.Males				
% At or Above Basic	92	95	92	N/A
% At or Above Proficient	64	48	38	N/A
% At Advanced	5	3	2	N/A
Number of students tested	39	40	53	N/A
2.Females				
% At or Above Basic	96	98	95	N/A
% At or Above Proficient	61	48	55	N/A
% At Advanced	9	5	3	N/A
Number of students tested	23	44	40	N/A
3. Black				
% At or Above Basic	86	95	94	N/A
% At or Above Proficient	50	50	33	N/A
% At Advanced	7	5	0	N/A
Number of students tested	14	22	18	N/A
4.White				
% At or Above Basic	97	98	98	N/A
% At or Above Proficient	71	46	60	N/A
% At Advanced	9	2	2	N/A
Number of students tested	35	50	47	N/A
5. Hispanic				
% At or Above Basic	88	88	86	N/A
% At or Above Proficient	63	44	29	N/A
% At Advanced	0	11	0	N/A
Number of students tested	8	9	14	N/A
6. Free/Reduced Lunch				
% At or Above Basic	94	95	NA	NA
% At or Above Proficient	52	34	NA	NA
% At Advanced	3	2	NA	NA
Number of students tested	31	41	NA	NA
STATE SCORES				
% At or Above Basic	89	93	93	N/A
% At or Above Proficient	69	53	51	N/A
% At Advanced	9	8	8	N/A