

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2010 - Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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Type of School: (Check all that apply)     Charter  Title I  Magnet  Choice

Name of Principal: Ms. Susan Stuckey

Official School Name: Highlands Elementary School

School Mailing Address:  
525 S Brainard St  
Naperville, IL 60540-6600

County: DuPage    State School Code Number\*: 190222030262004

Telephone: (630) 420-6335    Fax: (630) 420-6957

Web site/URL: http://schools.naperville203.org/highlands    E-mail: sstuckey@naperville203.org

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

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*: Dr. Mark Mitrovich

District Name: Naperville CUSD 203    Tel: (630) 420-6300

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

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Mr. Mike Jaensch

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

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

*\*Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*  
The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to Aba Kumi, Blue Ribbon Schools Project Manager (aba.kumi@ed.gov) or mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173

## PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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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 for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made adequate yearly progress each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement in the 2009-2010 school year. AYP must be certified by the state and all appeals resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take the course.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2003.
6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 or 2009.
7. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
8. 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 OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
9. 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.
10. 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: (per district designation)
- |           |                                   |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| 14        | Elementary schools (includes K-8) |
| 5         | Middle/Junior high schools        |
| 2         | High schools                      |
|           | K-12 schools                      |
| <b>21</b> | <b>TOTAL</b>                      |

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: 10760

**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. 10 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.

5. Number of students as of October 1 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			0	6			0
K	51	38	89	7			0
1	52	44	96	8			0
2	43	35	78	9			0
3	49	53	102	10			0
4	62	62	124	11			0
5	66	44	110	12			0
<b>TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL</b>							599

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native  
16 % Asian  
2 % Black or African American  
3 % Hispanic or Latino  
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  
78 % White  
1 % Two or more races  
100 % Total

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 4 %

This rate is calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	9
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	13
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	22
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1.	602
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.037
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	3.654

8. Limited English proficient students in the school: 1 %

Total number limited English proficient 6

Number of languages represented: 4

Specify languages:

French, Korean, Mandarin, Thai

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 2 %

Total number students who qualify: 13

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-price school meals 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: 7 %

Total Number of Students Served: 43

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>8</u> Autism	<u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>1</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>18</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>4</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>6</u> Developmentally Delayed

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>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>24</u>	<u>0</u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>12</u>	<u>8</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>14</u>	<u>0</u>
Support staff	<u>10</u>	<u>5</u>
Total number	<u>61</u>	<u>14</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 25 :1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates. Briefly explain in the Notes section any attendance rates under 95%, teacher turnover rates over 12%, or student dropout rates over 5%.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
Daily teacher attendance	99%	99%	98%	99%	99%
Teacher turnover rate	7%	5%	2%	12%	2%
Student dropout rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Please provide all explanations below.

14. For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools).

Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2009 are doing as of the Fall 2009.

Graduating class size	0	
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0	%
Enrolled in a community college	0	%
Enrolled in vocational training	0	%
Found employment	0	%
Military service	0	%
Other (travel, staying home, etc.)	0	%
Unknown	0	%
<b>Total</b>	0	%

## PART III - SUMMARY

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Highlands School serves 600 pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade students in a suburban community 30-miles west of Chicago, Illinois. Naperville Community Unit District 203 (18,000 students) consists of 14 elementary schools, five junior highs and two high schools. Highlands is centrally located to the downtown area, adjacent to North Central College. Our community is approximately 140,000 residents. Our parent community is highly-educated and targets enrollment in our school as a priority. Expectations for high academic achievement and enthusiastic parent participation are among the many factors that contribute to student confidence, pride and success.

The teaching staff is committed to quality instruction and knowing the needs of each learner. Of the 47 certified staff, over 94 percent have master degrees in education; seven have earned National Board Certification and four currently are National Board candidates. This internal desire to improve instruction and collaborate over curriculum and student needs creates enhanced learning opportunities for students.

Highlands has a low turn-over rate among our staff. As the teachers have worked together for many years on professional development and grade-level lesson planning, such collaboration fosters common goals and creates a shared interest in program initiatives. Recognizing that students learn many elements through Writer's Workshop, yet never have enough experiences in a school year, six teachers created a two-week summer workshop for students to dedicate two hours per day immersed in writing. Teachers also offer before-school and after-school learning opportunities in many areas of interest: Study Skills Academy, Chess Club, Grade Level Physical Games, Rock Climbing, Chorus, Math Games, Literature Club, Student Advisory Board, Spanish Club, Chinese Club, Artrageous, Pack Runners and Word Games.

In our effort to improve the quality of education for current and future students, a partnership was developed with the North Central College Education Department. We provide practicum and student teaching opportunities, as well as reading tutors, for 16 sessions that allow reading certificate candidates to plan instruction for low-achieving readers and receive feedback from school reading specialists and college professors.

Highlands School actively holds the District 203 mission statement as the guiding attribute of our teaching. The five keys around which we align school improvement goals, parent education and common language for our school community are "to educate students to be self-directed learners, collaborative workers, complex thinkers, quality producers and community contributors." In view of the fact that the overall achievement level in reading and math has maintained in the upper 90<sup>th</sup> percentile over the past five years, our professional learning community decided not to target specific skills as an end goal, but rather develop student thinkers and problem solvers.

As a result we are studying and integrating Art Costa's *Habits of Mind* thinking behaviors. As a school we use 16 common descriptors of higher-level thinking (ex. questioning and posing problems, thinking flexibly, managing impulsivity, persisting, metacognition, striving for accuracy, etc.). This language is integrated into instructional plans and also commonly used by students to give them descriptive language to communicate their thinking. We have seen a tremendous growth in self-directed learning and complex thinking.

As the students have become more comfortable with the meaning of these thinking behaviors, applying them at school and home, the staff linked the Habits of Mind language with the District 203 mission descriptors. This provides authentic understanding with more complex cognitive and social targets of the mission attributes.

We open and close the school year with Flag Raising and Lowering Ceremonies. Students exit fifth grade having worked collaboratively on an art project that is left behind to future students. Our students return for a time capsule celebration at the end of their senior year in high school. High academic success and meaningful traditions are a source of student pride.

## PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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### 1. **Assessment Results:**

Highlands School students have for many years performed well above the average in standardized as well as local assessments. Highlands students have continued to show evidence of learning in the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT). Last year 98% of our third grade students met or exceeded expectations in reading and 98% met or exceeded in mathematics. Our fourth grade students showed high performance with 99% meeting or exceeding in both reading and math. Fifth graders also did well with 99% meeting or exceeding in reading and 97% in math. This high level of performance was mirrored by the student performance on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Students in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades met or exceeded at a rate of 97% or better in the areas of reading and mathematics.

We are proud of the work both students and teachers have exhibited in these high scores, but are equally proud of the growth we have shown over the past five years. Between 2005 and 2009, our 3<sup>rd</sup> grade meets and exceeds scores in reading increased from 90% to 98%. The 3<sup>rd</sup> grade percent of students exceeding in reading grew from 52% to 78%. Third graders also grew in mathematics performance. In 2005, 61% of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders exceeded expectations in mathematics, but by 2009 91% of all 3<sup>rd</sup> graders at Highlands exceeded expectations.

Students in our 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes have shown significant growth. Over the last five years, 5<sup>th</sup> grade students have gone from a 94% meeting or exceeding in reading to 99% meeting or exceeding in 2009. More significantly, the exceeds group grew from 52% of 5<sup>th</sup> graders in 2005 to 66% of 5<sup>th</sup> graders exceeding expectations in reading performance in 2009. These data trends tell us that the instructional strategies we employ create real payoff for most of our students. As the teachers reflect on the data, the conversations revolve around current efforts and new strategies we might use so that we can continually increase the number of students from warning to meets and from the meets expectations to the exceeds expectations levels.

Highlands School does not have a large number of Black or Hispanic Students, nor do we have many students who qualify for the Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) program, therefore it is difficult to see any clear consistent patterns for these groups. However when we review the data for these students it is clear that we are addressing, and will continue to address, their needs.

Between 2005 and 2009, we have seen our FRL 3<sup>rd</sup> graders go from 50% meets and exceeds to 100% meets or exceeds in reading. We also see that 7 out of the 10 sets of data we have for our FRL students in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade show 83% or better of these students meet or exceed expectations in reading performance. Likewise 7 out of the 10 data sets show 100% of these same students meet or exceed expectations in mathematics performance.

When we review the performance of Black students at Highlands we see that in 2006 50% of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 33% of 4<sup>th</sup>, and 66% of 5<sup>th</sup> graders met or exceeded expectations in reading. By 2009, 100% of Black students in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade met or exceeded expectations in reading performance. The Hispanic students at Highlands do equally well. Since 2006 with one exception (5<sup>th</sup> grade in 2005) 100% of our Hispanic 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> graders met or exceeded expectations in both math and reading. As mentioned earlier, we do not have enough students in these subgroups to form consistent and reliable trends, but we do feel when these individual data points are taken as a whole it shows that Highlands is meeting the needs of students in these subgroups.

Highlands School state assessment data may be found on the State of Illinois website at [http://www.isbe.state.il.us/research/htmls/report\\_card.htm](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/research/htmls/report_card.htm) or on the District 203 website at <http://www.naperville203.org/assets/HighlandsReportCard%2Epdf>

### 2. **Using Assessment Results:**

At Highlands, assessment results are utilized to help guide instruction and determine student supports. Both academic and social/emotional data is used as we consider the needs of the whole student.

A team of classroom teachers, support personnel, parents and administrators attend an annual two-day data review workshop, called Data SPA (Strategic Planning Analysis). The team analyzes the results of standardized testing, local assessments, and survey data, looking for evidence of the impact of school improvement initiatives, trends and areas of support that need to be addressed. This conversation steers the refinement of the multi-year School Improvement Plan (SIP).

Moving from school-wide data trends to individual student performance, each grade-level team, administrators, and support team member reviews all available student assessments. Using the data, decisions are made about the delivery of instruction and the need for interventions. Intervention groups are put in place for those students whose needs are not being met through the core curriculum and differentiated instruction. Students who score in the above average range have their needs met through enrichment groups and accelerated literacy and math programs.

Student progress is monitored and as needs change, so do the supports. Students who are not making progress despite differentiated instruction and intervention may need to receive more intensive intervention support. This review process, which includes parents, continues until goals are met.

In the springs of 2008 and 2009, the students at Highlands were surveyed to determine their perception of safety procedures, behavioral expectations, and social/emotional systems in place. A Behavior Cadre was formed which analyzed the survey data and put together a plan to address the areas of need. The Cadre analyzed survey results and determined the school's progress toward meeting student social and emotional needs and implemented additional system modifications.

### **3. Communicating Assessment Results:**

The staff at Highlands makes a conscientious and concerted effort to ensure that all stakeholders – students, parents and the community – are informed about the results of assessments and understand the meaning and use of the data. Through Data SPA, our school and parent leaders are engaged in analysis, projections, and refinement of our school improvement plan. This collaborative work is shared with the Building Leadership Team. Other venues in which assessment results are shared with parents are: through e-mail and as a part of a district evening conference, formal parent/teacher conferences held twice yearly, our parent newsletter (Highlands Happenings), parent coffees with the principal and instructional coordinator, and Home and School (parent organization) meetings.

SharePoint, a web-based portal, is an integral communication tool used by the Response to Intervention (RTI) Team to share student progress. The Highlands RTI Team, composed of reading, speech/language, learning behavior specialists, school nurse, instructional coordinator, social worker, and a child's classroom teacher meet on a weekly basis to discuss student assessment results so that we may identify a problem, formulate a plan, and monitor the plan's effectiveness. Parents are invited to all RTI meetings for their child so they understand the meaning and use of data collected and can contribute towards brainstorming supports and solutions.

Students receive frequent and specific performance feedback via formal and informal teacher contacts. This school-wide practice of using assessment results to create student-generated goals promotes self-directed learners. Our gifted magnet multi-age classroom uses student-led conferences to develop a partnership between students, parents, and teachers. The knowledge built from these conversations helps to target goal setting.

### **4. Sharing Success:**

Naperville 203 looks to our staff as leaders. A large percentage of our staff serve on district-wide curriculum committees such as math, word study, and social science. Highlands staff has a reputation for leadership and excellence in teaching. Many participate in presentations at district, local and state organizations (International Reading Association, ASCD National Conference, guest lecturing at North Central College, Illinois Computing Educators Conference). Highlands teachers also serve as formal and informal mentors to support new teachers, particularly with the implementation of grade level curriculum. Art Costa, co-founder of Habits of Mind, regards Highlands as an exemplary school, and has often cited Highlands teachers for their ideas and lesson plans supporting the use of the Habits within the home, school and community setting.

The parent community at Highlands is a vehicle for sharing our success. Our School Family Community Partnership (SFCP) is frequently cited in Promising Partnership Practices, an annual, national publication from the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University. Highlands, recognized with the National Partnership School Award for nine consecutive years, shares their SFCP programs success with other district elementary schools as well. Our, principal, Susan Stuckey, is often asked to share her skills in strengthening parent involvement at the district and local level.

Because of our success here at Highlands, area schools request visits to observe our passion for excellence. Striving to be community contributors, we hosted an area parochial school and a local suburban school district, offering mentoring, modeling and discussion of our teaching and beliefs that support the success of each of our students. Area colleges and universities frequently call upon Highlands to serve as the educational model for their practicum students. Sharing the fruits of our passion energizes us to continue innovating and striving to meet our students' needs.

## PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Curriculum:

District 203 curriculum is designed to give our students tools to master concepts, unlocking their understanding of the world. Our curriculum is inquiry based, with teachers as the experts in guiding student learning. Design is concept based, emphasizing the mastery of conceptual knowledge, not just specific skills or facts. Each subject area follows a seven year review cycle, with teachers serving on the team. Teachers are invited to serve on the curriculum review committee, studying current research and best practice. The committee formulates a philosophy statement, aligning their beliefs with the District 203 vision and mission. Student outcomes, based on state standards, guide the curriculum framework. *Understanding by Design*, by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, serves as the model for our subject frameworks, with enduring understandings, essential questions and learning targets guiding our instruction. Our curriculum emphasizes clear learning goals with a variety of ways to achieve these goals, honoring various learning styles and differentiation for students. Formative assessment allows ongoing feedback for students and teachers for the goal of guiding instructional planning.

In designing lessons, we give great consideration to student engagement. Highlands teachers, take great care in choosing resources and materials to enhance student learning. Hands-on manipulatives allow for exploration and solidification of concepts. With SmartBoards in every classroom, teachers create highly engaging lessons with strong visuals and immediate feedback which increases learning. Annually, a team of “Focus Walkers” gather classroom engagement data. Teachers interpret and reflect on the focus walk data to inform instruction.

Highlands offers a balanced literacy program consisting of read aloud/think alouds, shared reading with think aloud, guided reading, independent reading, authentic strategy practice, and vocabulary/word study. Our focus is to create and nurture a love of reading. Mathematical concepts are explored in depth, allowing active engagement, in-depth investigation and risk-taking, encouraging our students to apply these fundamental mathematical concepts within the classroom and world around them. Reading and mathematics serve as the foundation of our curriculum and will be discussed in more detail in later sections.

District 203 writing curriculum is built upon a foundation of teacher modeling, shared writing and student writing. Targeted mini lessons, 6 + 1 Traits, Writer’s Workshop, peer, and teacher conferencing all enhance student learning, helping students grow into joyful, confident writers. Students develop their voice, creating and sharing through pen and paper, author’s chair, electronic blogs, podcasts, class web-based discussion boards, and digital storytelling.

An inquiry based science curriculum fosters instruction that models and provides students the opportunities to observe, question, investigate, problem solve, predict, evaluate and communicate their ideas. The “I Wonder” circle visually guides students in their inquiry, helping them to discover the interrelatedness between wondering, thinking, trying, observing/recording and discovering. Our District 203 health education supplements our science curriculum, integrating the mental, social, emotional, and physical dimensions of health, helping our students to build these principles into a healthy lifestyle.

Our social science curriculum focuses on concepts rather than the memorization of facts. Each grade level introduces specific concepts, broadening skills and ideas throughout the years. For instance, in Kindergarten, our curriculum focuses on the concept of connections that shape the world around us. As a student progresses, this concept will expand to relationships within our families (1<sup>st</sup>), relationships to the community (2<sup>nd</sup>), specific community systems (3<sup>rd</sup>), regions of the United States (4<sup>th</sup>), and finally more global issues of revolution, pluralism and power in relation to United States history (5<sup>th</sup>). Each trimester highlights a specific case study exemplifying that trimester’s concept (*Revolution*: American Revolution; *Pluralism*: Civil War; *Power*: WWII). Facts and skills are learned in the context of the case study, allowing our students to make logical connections between events and ideas.

Our Fine Arts department extends our students' learning by utilizing multiple intelligences, allowing them to explore and enhance specific skills. Art projects often have a curriculum connection, integrated with grade level study. Visitors comment on the large amount of student art proudly displayed around our building. In music, students learn the basics of music theory and vocals, synthesizing their knowledge in annual, grade level, student productions. In physical education, students incorporate their knowledge of the HOM by setting personal health and fitness goals, using metacognitive thinking and persistence to achieve their goals.

#### **2a. (Elementary Schools) Reading:**

(This question is for elementary schools only)

Our district-wide literacy philosophy integrates the study of reading, writing, speaking and listening in order to meet the goals identified in the Illinois Learning Standards. Our K-12 literacy curriculum recognizes the recursiveness of literacy skills, thus, it provides increasingly sophisticated content and fosters increased independence of the learner. Serving as resources for best practices in reading are *Mosaic of Thought*, 1997 by Keene and Zimmerman and *Strategies That Work*, 2000 by Harvey and Goudvis. Embedded within the curriculum is systematic word study that creates phonemic awareness, word attack skills and vocabulary development. Within the read-aloud and shared reading settings of balanced literacy instruction, cognitive strategies are modeled through "think-alouds," so children can observe and better understand before trying reading strategies on their own. During guided reading and within flexible groups, students are given time to reflect, time to discuss, and time to practice reading strategies. Students also work at applying strategies, developing fluency, and building confidence as readers during daily independent reading opportunities. We have literature-rich classrooms where children can explore, learn from and react to a wide variety of texts and genres. Our students are encouraged to read actively, rather than passively, questioning and challenging what is read. They are also provided a well-developed arsenal of tools to use flexibly, adaptively, and independently to solve comprehension and word identification problems when they occur.

Our students share books socially, both within the classroom and at an after-school literature club, talking about text to gain deeper understanding and to add layers of interpretation that are further enlightened by each reader's experiences. Other purposeful text discussions occur via school-wide reading buddies, in which older students serve as coaches and "encouragers" to our younger students, through our partnership with North Central College (Cardinal Reading Buddies) and three annual parent-child book clubs. The Learning Resource Center is an integral support to self-directed learning as it serves as a catalyst for new book-sharing initiatives, for example, an online literature blog and student-created podcast book recommendations, guidance in book selection, coordination of author visits, and delivery of information literacy lessons.

### **3. Additional Curriculum Area:**

#### **Math:**

Our mathematics curriculum has been written by district teachers and curriculum experts. We work as a K-12 committee to insure that the curriculum is consistent and coherent across all grades and levels. Our work has been largely influenced by the work of the National Council Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and their Standards and the Curriculum Focal Points documents, the TIMSS study, the Illinois State Math Goals, and our district's commitment to inquiry based learning. Each of our grade levels focus on no more than three of the five mathematics strands. Our curriculum is designed to have students focus on fewer objectives, but to have a deeper and broader understanding of these objectives. Mathematics instruction is strategy and concept focused, involves hands-on learning, problem solving and provides many opportunities for students to learn through writing.

Grade level instruction is driven by the goals and objectives written by the math committee, not those found in math texts. Students are expected not only to be fluent with math facts, but to be able to demonstrate fact strategies and an understanding of numeracy. Our 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers are trained in the *Student Numeracy Assessment Progressions* (SNAP). SNAP assessment provides teachers with knowledge about the skills students have mastered and what skills are still needed. Having all these teachers trained in this assessment has supported them to be more student-focused than unit-focused. Problem solving instruction not only instructs students in useful strategies, but in identifying when these strategies should be employed. One of our innovations is to write and film math problem situations for students to watch and solve. Students find

the math problem solving video format engaging, but more importantly they tap into another modality for students to deal with significant concepts and learning. Hands-on learning opportunities match the modality needs of our students and also provide them with many lessons to make conjectures about patterns and relationships as they study mathematics.

The many cooperative learning and critical thinking activities found in the mathematics curriculum supports our mission statement to graduate collaborative workers, complex thinkers, and quality producers. Students find the Habits of Mind language they learn in all areas of the curriculum serves them well as they solve problems, look for patterns, and communicate findings.

#### **4. Instructional Methods:**

The educators at Highlands differentiate instruction for all types of learners. The goal is to meet the needs of students through innovative teaching methods which include intervention, enrichment, and the use of technology.

In the classroom, instruction is delivered in a variety of ways for the benefit of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. Teachers differentiate their instruction based on assessment data, classroom performance, and learning styles. Guided reading is a staple of District 203's balanced literacy approach. Teachers also differentiate academic instruction by meeting with small groups of students based on math and writing needs. Second grade teachers have formed flexible writing groups by sharing students based on their instructional level, while fourth grade teachers are providing an eight week targeted writing instruction for at-risk students.

Students with non-academic needs are also supported through a variety of instructional methods. There are several social skill groups which meet frequently and are facilitated by both classroom teachers and support staff. Students with motor deficits receive intervention through small group activities facilitated by both certified staff and trained paraprofessionals.

Two full-time reading specialists provide direct reading instruction in order to focus their support on skill deficits. They also collaborate with classroom teachers and parents. Two Learning Behavior Specialists (LBS) deliver services to special education students in helping them reach their IEP goals. Regular education students also benefit from this targeted instruction and expertise. Special education assistants work closely with the LBS teachers as they supplement instruction with alternate activities to support students.

To address those student needs not served through formal gifted programming, reading and mathematics small group learning is provided. Certified classroom teachers design curriculum enrichment lessons which are delivered by a paraprofessional to flexible groups. In addition, classroom teachers further differentiate within the curriculum to promote higher level thinking.

In all forms of instruction, we strive to raise the level of student engagement; one key tool in this effort is the use of technology. With one computer for every three students, Highlands provides students ready access to technology. Our students create digital stories, podcasts, blogs, and movies. When students create real products for real audiences their level of engagement and learning is increased.

#### **5. Professional Development:**

The Highlands Staff determines the focus for our School Improvement Plan (SIP) collaboratively, after review of student achievement data trends and analysis of current year accomplishments toward current SIP goals. Building a shared understanding for the direction of professional development, the administration and instructional coordinator coach determine appropriate research-based resources upon which to base our study.

The majority of our professional development has focused on the study of Habits of Mind and implementation of the District 203 mission statement. Institute days throughout the year have been used for book study purposes, developing operationalized meanings of the thinking behaviors and mission statement attributes, as well as creating avenues to use this common language in everyday integrated practice. Additionally, we have used faculty meetings to learn new behavioral strategies to support students with Autism. With a SmartBoard in every classroom, colleagues have shared instructional design of lessons and user insights in order to enhance student engagement, thus higher levels of student learning.

Who designs and instructs staff development opportunities for the staff? Often times it is our own faculty members who are experts through District curriculum design work, diligent practice, relationships with authors, or involvement on State Board of Education curriculum teams. When participatory leadership is effectively used, all staff members create interest and desire to enhance their repertoire and add to the fabric of our professional knowledge. Professional development dialogue is structured so that teachers work in grade level teams, vertical teams, area of interest for lesson study, professional learning communities per topic, etc. We have benefited from cross-grade level experiences, better understanding the sequence of learning at various grade levels. By designing our own staff development offerings, we can tailor our learning toward our greatest needs.

A full-time instructional coordinator coach bridges the professional development offerings into application in the classroom. Through professional learning community conversations and individually, she connects teachers with the resources they need to achieve their personal or team learning goals.

#### **6. School Leadership:**

Our school of 600 students has a principal, half-time assistant principal, instructional coordinator coach, LRC director and technology integration specialist that serve as “Key Leaders” for Highlands. Although only the first two are considered “administration,” we work collaboratively, bringing expertise from a variety of interest areas. Members of this team serve on a larger decision making team, known as the Building Leadership Team (BLT). This team of parents, classroom teachers, specialists and Key Leaders meets monthly to work toward implementing the vision of our school regarding school improvement, school culture, parent education events and general student support.

We create learning opportunities for SIP study two times per month. The faculty learns together so our common knowledge is pooled to deliver a concise, cohesive message to our students. All of our work filters through the lens of the five district mission attributes. As parents annually brainstorm family education activities, the BLT ensures that all efforts for designing and presenting learning events will move the vision and learning of students forward in a well-planned direction.

Over 100 parents serve in leadership positions in two parent groups, Home & School and School Family Community Partnership. These two groups have different missions with both supporting student learning and parent education. Parents willingly serve in a capacity that enhances their involvement and meets their level of time and talent, balancing their own family/life responsibilities.

In an effort to increase parent involvement in our largest minority the Asian/Pacific Islander student group, new relationships were cultivated through evening focus group conversations and networking. Additionally a Neighborhood Ambassador Program was initiated.

By working closely to create benefits for kids and families, such as offering Cultural Games Night or Get A Clue-Math Detectives, stronger relationships grow between school and home. Finally, a monthly school newsletter is published with articles submitted by administration, teachers and parents. This offers an avenue for sharing progress toward our SIP, why changes are made to policies or practices, and how families can best support their children in the ongoing learning process.

# PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 3

Test: ISAT

Edition/Publication Year: 1999-2009

Publisher: Pearson/ISBE

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	98	100	100	98	95
% Advanced	91	89	71	77	61
Number of students tested	116	98	101	120	100
Percent of total students tested	100	100	98	99	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	2	1	1
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	2	1	1
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>5. Limited English Proficient Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>6. Largest Other Subgroup</b>					
Asian/Pacific Islander	100	100	100	100	100
% Advanced	100	100	95	100	83
Number of students tested	22	19	19	15	12

**Notes:**

Alternate testing students are ones in our Special Education Instructional Classroom. The students who were given the alternate assessment had significant cognitive disabilities that would prevent them from being able to take a typical standardized test.

Subject: Reading  
Edition/Publication Year: 1999-2009

Grade: 3 Test: ISAT  
Publisher: Pearson/ISBE

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	98	97	99	97	90
% Advanced	78	64	65	65	52
Number of students tested	116	98	101	120	100
Percent of total students tested	100	100	98	99	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	2	1	1
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	2	1	1
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>5. Limited English Proficient Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>6. Largest Other Subgroup</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	100	95	100	100	100
% Advanced	95	68	79	93	67
Number of students tested	22	19	19	15	12

Notes:

Alternate testing students are ones in our Special Education Instructional Classroom. The students who were given the alternate assessment had significant cognitive disabilities that would prevent them from being able to take a typical standardized test.

Subject: Mathematics  
Edition/Publication Year: 1999-2009

Grade: 4 Test: ISAT  
Publisher: Pearson/ISBE

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	99	98	98	97	
% Advanced	64	60	59	57	
Number of students tested	104	109	133	106	
Percent of total students tested	100	98	100	100	
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	2	0	0	
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	2	0	0	
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>5. Limited English Proficient Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>6. Largest Other Subgroup</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	100	100	100	100	
% Advanced	80	90	84	93	
Number of students tested	20	21	25	15	0

Notes:

Alternate testing students are ones in our Special Education Instructional Classroom. The students who were given the alternate assessment had significant cognitive disabilities that would prevent them from being able to take a typical standardized test.

Illinois Standards Achievement Test was not given to Grade 4 students in school year 2004-2005.

Subject: Reading  
Edition/Publication Year: 1999-2009

Grade: 4 Test: ISAT  
Publisher: Pearson/ISBE

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	98	99	96	93	
% Advanced	62	66	64	69	
Number of students tested	104	109	133	106	
Percent of total students tested	100	98	100	100	
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	2	0	0	
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	2	0	0	
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>5. Limited English Proficient Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>6. Largest Other Subgroup</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	100	100	100	100	
% Advanced	70	86	88	93	
Number of students tested	20	21	25	15	

Notes:

Alternate testing students are ones in our Special Education Instructional Classroom. The students who were given the alternate assessment had significant cognitive disabilities that would prevent them from being able to take a typical standardized test.

Illinois Standards Achievement Test was not given to Grade 4 students in school year 2004-2005.

Subject: Mathematics  
Edition/Publication Year: 1999-2009

Grade: 5 Test: ISAT  
Publisher: Pearson/ISBE

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	97	98	98	98	95
% Advanced	48	52	56	43	30
Number of students tested	117	127	117	120	124
Percent of total students tested	98	100	100	100	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	0	0	0	1
Percent of students alternatively assessed	2	0	0	0	1
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>5. Limited English Proficient Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>6. Largest Other Subgroup</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	100	100	100	100	100
% Advanced	90	84	94	58	65
Number of students tested	21	25	17	12	17

Notes:

Alternate testing students are ones in our Special Education Instructional Classroom. The students who were given the alternate assessment had significant cognitive disabilities that would prevent them from being able to take a typical standardized test.

Subject: Reading  
Edition/Publication Year: 1999-2009

Grade: 5  
Test: ISAT  
Publisher: Pearson/ISBE

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	99	97	95	98	94
% Advanced	66	57	75	67	52
Number of students tested	117	127	117	120	124
Percent of total students tested	98	100	100	100	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	0	0	0	1
Percent of students alternatively assessed	2	0	0	0	1
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>5. Limited English Proficient Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>6. Largest Other Subgroup</b>					
Asian/Pacific Islander	100	100	100	100	100
% Advanced	100	88	88	83	76
Number of students tested	21	25	17	12	17

Notes:

Alternate testing students are ones in our Special Education Instructional Classroom. The students who were given the alternate assessment had significant cognitive disabilities that would prevent them from being able to take a typical standardized test.