

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

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

Name of Principal: Mr. James Verrilli

Official School Name: North Star Academy Charter School of Newark

School Mailing Address:
10 Washington Place
Newark, NJ 07102-3106

County: Essex State School Code Number*: 80-7320-960

Telephone: (973) 642-0101 Fax: (973) 642-5800

Web site/URL: http://www.uncommonschools.org/nsa/home/index.html E-mail:
mambri@northstaracademy.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*: Mr. Paul Bambrick-Santoyo

District Name: Newark School District Tel: (973) 733-7333

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. Rick Reider

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

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 2004.
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)

	Elementary schools (includes K-8)
	Middle/Junior high schools
	High schools
1	K-12 schools
1	TOTAL

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: 13524

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. 8 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	0	0	6	57	87	144
K	30	51	81	7	49	63	112
1	35	44	79	8	37	68	105
2	41	32	73	9	27	53	80
3	0	0	0	10	15	23	38
4	0	0	0	11	6	18	24
5	67	92	159	12	2	12	14
TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL							909

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
1 % Asian
83 % Black or African American
16 % Hispanic or Latino
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
0 % White
0 % 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: 8 %

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.	26
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	37
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	63
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1.	761
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.083
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	8.279

8. Limited English proficient students in the school: 0 %

Total number limited English proficient 0

Number of languages represented: 0

Specify languages:

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 80 %

Total number students who qualify: 726

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: 67

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>2</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>9</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>34</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>15</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>2</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</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>7</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>80</u>	<u>3</u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Support staff	<u>21</u>	<u>0</u>
Total number	<u>113</u>	<u>5</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 11 :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%	98%
Teacher turnover rate	8%	16%	2%	0%	0%
Student dropout rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Please provide all explanations below.

Student and teacher attendance remains consistently high, showing the dedication both have for being at school.

Over North Star's history, most teacher attrition is due to life changes: graduate school, marriage, new geographies, etc. Very few teachers choose to leave school to go to other schools. In 2007-08, there were two additional factors that increased the overall attrition. One of our schools changed locations within Newark, moving to one that was much less accessible via transportation. There were also a few staff members who transitioned to working for our sister organization, Uncommon Schools. While still supporting North Star, they could no longer be considered North Star employees. Those two spikes caused the change in overall attrition for this one year. 2008-09 numbers returned to more normal teacher attrition.

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	30	
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	80	%
Enrolled in a community college	7	%
Enrolled in vocational training	3	%
Found employment	0	%
Military service	3	%
Other (travel, staying home, etc.)	7	%
Unknown	0	%
Total	100	%

PART III - SUMMARY

The challenge in Newark is real: according to US Census data, fewer than 9% of Newark residents have graduated from a four-year college, and the per capita income is \$13,009. The New Jersey City Kids Count data paints a similarly grim picture: Newark children are less healthy, less likely to finish high school, and less likely to reach adulthood than any other children across the state.

North Star Academy Charter School of Newark (North Star) was founded to radically change the outcomes for Newark youth. It set the goal of eliminating the achievement gap, graduating more Newark youth from college, and bringing urban education reform to Newark and cities across the country.

When US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan visited in June 2009, he stated, “I was looking for the best school in Newark, and this is it. One thing is for sure: this school has raised the bar...We need to take these islands of excellence to build more schools like this nationwide.” Over the past ten years, North Star has demonstrated itself to be the highest performing non-selective urban public school in the state of New Jersey. While students enter North Star significantly behind their state peers (fewer than 40% are proficient on standardized assessments), by the time a student has been at North Star for two years, 90% of them are at or above proficiency on state assessments at their grade level. This is occurring in a school where 75-90% of the students have qualified for free or reduced lunch over the past five years. Most importantly, 100% of North Star seniors are accepted to four-year colleges (the highest acceptance rate in the state of New Jersey), and 80% of North Star alumni have graduated or are on track to graduate from college.

The success of North Star students has made the school one of the most celebrated in the country. Newark Mayor Cory Booker shares with students, “I have traveled all across the nation, and at every turn I have bragged about your accomplishments and the example you set for our nation...Parents across the city constantly approach me and talk about North Star as the mecca of hope and college promise for their children. North Star is one of the most inspiring teams I have ever witnessed.”

North Star’s results begin with its unique culture. “There’s something unmistakable about North Star Academy, and it begins in the morning when drums pound and chants rise from this former bank building in downtown Newark,” stated John Mooney of the New Jersey Star Ledger. Every facet of the school culture supports the vision of “seeing the star,” guiding students on the path to success in college and in life. The tone is set from the minute students enter the door. Each morning, students, teachers, and leaders across North Star gather together in the ritual of a community circle. As a part of North Star, every community member knows she or he is responsible to abide by a higher standard and the core values of responsibility, courage, respect, caring, and justice.

Upon this foundation of strong culture, North Star has added tightly-designed instructional systems that guarantee student achievement. No aspect of teaching and learning is left unaddressed: from data-driven instruction to instructional leadership to individual teacher support to the highest quality professional development. The results speak for themselves. Over the past five years, North Star has not simply maintained good results; it has steadily improved to outperforming the state’s highest income students while also tripling in size. In doing so, North Star has set a model for taking success to scale.

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results:

In examining North Star results on both state and national assessments, one can draw some immediate conclusions. First, results have gotten progressively better over the past five years with few discrepancies. Second, once students have been at North Star for two years, these results are not only significantly higher than the Newark average, they are also higher than the average proficiency of students statewide and also of white/high-income students statewide. Thus, North Star students have not only closed the achievement gap; they've eliminated it and even reversed it. Third, there are very few differences in performance of student subgroups. Moreover, those differences disappear over time as the students remain with us. What follows is a breakdown by grade span.

Elementary

The elementary school campus was the most recently founded (opening in 2007), so the only grades thus far are K-1. Students arrive with only 1-2 out of 80 students reading at grade level. Still, after only two years of operation, the Vailsburg Elementary Campus has its students performing alongside the top elementary students in the country. On the 2009 TerraNova, the following were the median national percentiles of North Star 1st grade students:

- Reading: 92nd national percentile
- Language: 96th national percentile
- Mathematics: 98th national percentile

This means that North Star students outperformed over 92% of their peers nationwide.

Middle

As the culmination of the middle school, the 8th grade New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK8) remains the best measure of North Star's middle school performance. North Star beat the statewide and white student/high income average in every subject area. From 2007-2009, student performance was above 90% in all subjects: Literacy, Math & Science. This is a notable improvement over the previous three years, when scores were still 30 to 50 points higher than its district counterparts but had not reached 90% other than in Literacy. These results remain similarly significant when disaggregated by race, income, and disability. In achieving these results, North Star students significantly outperformed NCLB Adequate Yearly Progress in every category and sub-category.

Students in grades 5-7 have also performed well on the NJASK. Within the first year at North Star, 5th grade students show great gains on their language arts and mathematics assessments. In 2009, 73% of students in language arts and 85% of students in mathematics scored proficient or advanced proficient on their assessment. By their second year at North Star, students are outperforming their peers all over the state. On the NJASK 7, the percentage of proficiency in language arts and mathematics was respectively 90% and 88%.

High School

In 2009, 100% of North Star were proficient in both Literacy and Mathematics on the NJ HSPA, making North Star the highest performing non-selective high school in the state of New Jersey. The numbers are as impressive when broken down by race and income as neither factor affects the success rate. They also represent a five-year trend of notable improvement in Mathematics and steady excellence in Literacy.

North Star 12th graders were the sixth cohort to take the Standardized Achievement Test (SAT). North Star's SAT scores for the Classes of 2008 and 2009 were the highest in school history. While the critical reading scores remain fairly consistent, the best math scores have steadily increased each year and now break 500.

And what is most exciting is that the current senior class averaged on their first attempt with the test in 2009 scored 1499—just one point shy of the national average for the SAT. This growth reflects over a 100 point gain from where students tested a mere five years ago.

The website where one can access state assessment data is as follows:

<http://education.state.nj.us/rc/rc09/rcoptions.php?c=80;d=7320;s=960;lt=N;st=T>

2. **Using Assessment Results:**

North Star's dramatic gains in student achievement have incentivized schools and districts across the country to replicate its practices. These practices are codified by North Star Managing Director Paul Bambrick-Santoyo in the book, Driven by Data. The results are promising: schools using North Star's model have become the highest performing schools (or the schools with the largest gains) in cities such as New Orleans, Oakland, Memphis, Baltimore, New York, and Chicago.

So what makes this model so successful? Driven by Data points to the key North Star drivers that separate schools that succeed from those that don't:

Assessments:

- Common, 4-6 week interim assessments (all teachers at the same grade level use the same assessments)
- aligned to state tests
- aligned to college readiness
- transparent: teachers see the test in advance of their teaching
- cumulative: re-assesses previously taught standards

Analysis:

- Quick: 48 hour turnaround of results
- Teacher-friendly, succinct data reports
- Teacher-owned analysis
- Test-in-hand analysis
- Deep: moves from “what” the students got wrong to “why” they got it wrong

Action:

- Plan new lessons based on data analysis
- Implement explicit teacher action plans
- Utilize on-going in-the-moment assessments to check for understanding
- Accountability: leaders hold teachers accountable to implementing action plans by observing teaching and reviewing lesson plans
- Engaged students: students know the end goal, how they did, and what actions they're taking to improve

Culture:

- Active leadership team is trained to lead data analysis meetings and maintain focus throughout the year
- Introductory professional development trains teachers in implementation
- Calendar: all assessments, analysis and action are in calendar at start of year
- Ongoing professional development addresses specific needs of the students
- Build by Borrowing: identify and implement best practices from high-achieving teachers and schools

3. **Communicating Assessment Results:**

North Star believes students and their families must be well-informed about their education. As a result, North Star has built several systems to ensure student performance is consistently communicated to families:

- 1) **Transparency of results:** Post-interim assessments, teachers from K-12 meet with students to make them aware of their results. These results are used in dialogue to share with students what next steps will need to be taken. Students may need to participate in tutorials, change the level of their reading text, etc. Families, too, get to see these results and are provided with opportunities on how best to support their children.
- 2) **8th grade exit criteria:** As students transition from middle school to high school, it was important for the school to communicate set standards that students must meet to be ready for this transition. This information is communicated to all families and students to ensure they know the bar they need to meet for this transition.
- 3) **Final performance tasks:** Each year, final performance tasks take place at the end of the year for middle school students. Students are responsible to put together cross-content theme projects and do an oral dissertation on this topic in front of peers, teachers, and members of the community. This continually proves to be a rigorous bar of academic and soft skills that students work to meet throughout the year.
- 4) **Progress report nights:** Progress reports are an important system to share with families and students academic standings. These nights are mandatory for families and attending these conferences with teachers is the only way families can get their child's report card. Over North Star's 12 year history, 95% of families come to progress report nights.

4. **Sharing Success:**

To truly change the face of public education, North Star has disseminated its best practices throughout the nation. As Dick Best, a New Leaders for New Schools coach, stated after a visit, “In my career, I have never met a school so willing to share their excellence with others. Your commitment to efficacy is a great inspiration.” North Star has attempted to impact urban educational reform in the following ways:

- 1) **Professional development:** School leaders and teachers from North Star have led hundreds of workshops over the last five years. Within these trainings, over 4,000 educators have been trained in the practices of data-driven instruction, classroom management, adult professional development, guided reading strategies, and development of school culture. With the data-driven workshop alone, over 300 schools across the country have explicitly developed an interim assessment model based on North Star’s and have shown increased results.
- 2) **On-site immersion:** Over the last five years, North Star has hosted over 3,000 visitors who have come to learn more about its schools. Most have been educators who run district and charter schools throughout the country and world. Through observations of classrooms and conversations with leaders, each visitor learns about best practices to take to their own school.
- 3) **Best practice publications:** In the last year, Paul Bambrick, North Star Managing Director, wrote Driven by Data. Doug Lemov wrote Teach Like a Champion, a book that codifies the various practices of many North Star teachers and leaders and assigns a common language to them. These books will be released this year and will provide educators around the country with numerous transformative strategies that they can adapt into their own schools.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum:

Curriculum is created with one thing in mind—student achievement of the end goals. In the case North Star, end goals relate to the North Star Assessments the school creates. Both New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS) and college readiness standards guide the creation of these assessments in all content areas. Given the emphasis on the end game, North Star creates its own curriculum with few exceptions—this includes activities, tests, and lesson plans. Every three years, teachers revamp assessments and curriculum which reflect the latest best practices and the lessons learned from teaching. The work results in concise curriculum guides and timelines as well as better vertical alignment within each subject. All teachers use these reinvigorated curricula across the school. Once the road map is defined, however, the bigger key becomes how North Star can monitor teacher instruction. The most powerful tools for monitoring curriculum at North Star are the North Star Assessment process, review of weekly lesson plans, and teacher observations and feedback sessions (formal/informal).

Through these processes, rigorous objectives drive the curriculum and the instruction. Teachers then use their own creativity and the guidance of leaders to determine which activities best meet those objectives. Below is a sample of activities in each content area.

Reading: Through reading challenging, engaging pieces of literature in their classes, North Star teachers focus on building the literacy skills necessary for students to read any text. Examples of novels that students read from the fifth grade to their senior year are: Indian in the Cupboard, To Kill a Mockingbird, House on Mango Street, Incidents in the Life of Slave Girl, and Song of Solomon.

Writing: In addition to learning the fundamentals of standard English grammar, North Star students write constantly – persuasive essays, thematic essays, journals, short stories, poems, creative narratives, comparative essays, explication on poetry and short stories, expository writing, research papers, friendly letters, business letters, and newspaper articles.

Science: North Star students are addressed as a “scientific community,” and learn to use the scientific method; write in science journals; discuss complex science issues such as genetics and heredity; develop websites about astronomy, earthquakes and volcanoes; map molecular structures and study Darwinian evolution.

Mathematics: Over the course of their math career at North Star middle school campuses, students evolve from tasks like internalizing times tables and operations charts through competitions to mastering a large set of mathematical procedures. Throughout high school students take Algebra II, Geometry, Pre-Calculus, and Calculus to prepare for the rigor of college mathematics.

Social Studies: In addition to writing papers, conducting independent research, and reading primary and secondary sources that analyze the American and world historical events students study, North Star students also have the opportunity to present their knowledge to their class in highly structured debates. In the eighth grade debate, students must advocate for whether John Brown was a freedom fighter or a terrorist.

Spanish: Through their three years in Spanish classes, students move towards increased fluency by writing extensive autobiographies, exploring African culture in Latin America, and designing PowerPoint presentations about social injustices occurring in Latin America (all in Spanish).

Theater: Through acting, students develop, create and sustain characters in improvisational and formal productions. Students were taught to express and develop character through movement and voice, sensory awareness and expressive development of personal creativity.

Physical Education: Students learn the importance of wellness and physical activity as key components of living a healthy lifestyle. All students engage in multiple forms of physical education throughout the year, complete a battery of physical fitness tests, and how to play multiple sports.

2a. (Elementary Schools) Reading:

(This question is for elementary schools only)

North Star Elementary follows the National Reading Panel's recommendation that quality early literacy instruction is an effective blend of five component of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension. Unfortunately, most current early reading assessments defer comprehension until later grades. To avoid this error, North Star identified the STEP assessment, a cutting-edge early literacy assessment from the University of Chicago that establishes a new standard for measuring critical reading comprehension from Kindergarten forward.

(The STEP assessment also measures the more traditional areas of fluency, decoding, and accuracy.)

North Star's Reading infrastructure supports the development of all these skills. The day begins with a whole class read aloud, and then each student receives three small group reading blocks per day: Reading Mastery (a scripted phonics, decoding and fluency program); independent reading (either reading an appropriate text or using a computer-based literacy program); and guided reading to learn critical reading skills and put them in action under the supervision of the lead teacher. The reading stations are each 45-minutes long and students are placed in homogeneous groups which rotate based on STEP results. This allows teachers to target individualized reading levels of each student and to ensure all kids are reading the appropriate texts.

The results of this approach have been so strong (92nd percentile on TerraNova; highest STEP results of any urban school nationwide) that North Star is currently created a K-4 Reading Instructional Guide to train additional teachers and disseminate best practices. The guide includes video clips of the effective techniques that teachers use during reading instruction: ask the right questions to allow students to get to the answer themselves, manage routines and procedures of three small groups simultaneously, develop habits of discussion, and select the right text to plan a lesson from start to finish.

2b. (Secondary Schools) English:

(This question is for secondary schools only)

When students enter North Star middle schools, the vast majority enter reading below grade level. As a result, the goal of our secondary school English curriculum is to use rigorous engaging novels and texts that pull students from below to above. Teachers select a variety of texts that range from multi-cultural, diverse texts to classic novels. The goal, however, in all literacy curriculum at North Star is to teach the reader and not the text. In saying that, North Star teachers teach students the specific skills that they need to critically think about both the text in their classroom as well as any text they choose to pick up. To do this, teachers create a rigorous curriculum using the backwards planning model that specifically teaches writing and reading strategies.

As secondary literacy teachers start to put together English curriculum, they look at the reading strategies, the vocabulary, and the writing skills students need to get prepared for college. While the standards do not necessarily change much over the years, the teachers continue to pick more difficult texts with each sequential year. In fifth and sixth grade, the literacy teachers break down literature and writing into two separate periods. This in particular allows them to focus on the necessary remediation for these incoming students. In

the latter grades, once the vast majority of the students are proficient, the English curriculum combines to consistently reinforce the tie between writing and reading for students. In addition, the literature teachers at the secondary level use the same techniques of guided reading (to reinforce comprehension skills); independent reading blocks (to build students' desire to read on their own); a writing workshop strategy called POWER writing (to systematize the writing process for students); and whole-class novel teaching (to hold all students to the same rigor).

3. **Additional Curriculum Area:**

Over the last decade, North Star leaders and teachers have designed a complete secondary math curriculum—grades 5-12. This curriculum was designed from scratch using New Jersey standardized assessments and state standards at first. As with all North Star curriculum and pedagogy, though, it was important that the school thought about success in college instead of just high school graduation. As a result, this meant students needed to be ready to take calculus by the time they graduated with us. To truly close the achievement gap for its students, North Star knew all kids needed this class to be competitive at the college level. In addition, the school also needed to incorporate SAT-style questions into their interim assessments. To get to this point, middle school math teachers worked diligently to ensure all eighth graders complete algebra upon middle school graduation.

Solid mathematics instruction must include both the teaching of procedures and the understanding behind why those procedures are necessary. This mixture of critical thinking skills and procedural understanding is at the heart of the North Star mathematics curriculum. A typical math block gets to doing this in the following way. To begin every math class, students start with word problems that cover review topics. They transition into something called 'oral drill'. Here all students are cold-called and asked about quick, rigorous math facts to test their automaticity. They follow this with an activity called an "excellence sheet". Again students are pushed to work fast and work on implementing the procedures they are currently learning or reviewing. Finally, they dive into the heart of the lesson where the teacher helps students dive into critical analysis of math through word problems or oral defenses of their strategies.

4. **Instructional Methods:**

Every student at North Star falls into the statistical category of "at-risk" established by No Child Left Behind, given the combination of factors that surround them (75% free-reduced lunch, 100% students of color, 9% of Newark residents are college graduates). However, North Star is founded on the principle that all students can achieve greatness. Therefore, the school is dedicated to meeting every student's individual needs, and every school program initially targets every student.

With the data driven model, educators are able to find out how all of their students perform on various standards. Each educator is responsible to put together an action plan that outlines how to address areas of lesser proficiency and to outline their ideas on how to differentiate instruction to meet all learners' needs and hold them to the same standards. Teachers work with students in small tutorial groups, in guided reading groups based on students' levels, or in one-on-one instruction during lunches or after school.

In addition, general educators work in grade level teams to determine if students who fall below standards will need additional intervention outside of his/her classroom. At North Star, students are not publicly recognized as special education students. In the skills room, students with Individualized Education Plans and students who are in need of additional intervention are taught in small groups. Special educators work closely with general educators to find out what areas of support to provide students. Sometimes, this may mean reviewing the same objective in a different style of instruction or in a smaller group setting; other times, it may mean providing students with fundamental reading skills through programs like Wilson Reading or "Foundations." In both cases, though, the idea behind our intervention program is that no student is left behind or held to a lower standard.

5. **Professional Development:**

North Star believes strongly in professional development for all of its teachers. The expectation is that all of our teachers can continue to get better and it is our leaders' job to help develop them. Only through improved teaching practice can students continue to meet a higher bar each year. As a result, North Star commits to the following strategies of professional development:

- 1) **One on one instructional support:** Each teacher is paired with an instructional leader at North Star from whom s/he gets intense instructional attention. Every week, the leader and teacher meet to discuss the upcoming week's lesson plans and ensure the objectives are aligned to both the curriculum and the data results from the previous interim assessment. In addition, the leader reviews all those lesson plans and provides feedback to the teacher each weekend. Finally, to keep their pulse on student learning, school leaders must be in the classroom regularly. Instructional leaders are observing each teacher at least once each week and providing feedback through regular weekly meetings.
- 2) **Weekly, monthly, and summer professional development sessions:** In addition to two to five weeks of professional development in the summer (depending upon their experience), teachers also participate in regular professional development each month through half day sessions and weekly staff meetings.
- 3) **Cutting edge video clips:** Over 5,000 hours of video footage of North Star teachers went into making a database of excellent 2-minute clips of best practices in teaching. These videos are used to train North Star and other educators around the country in what works. It also allows North Star educators to place a common language around the specific teaching traits that the schools believe good educators demonstrate. This reflective training helps teachers also develop common expectations around areas like behavioral and academic expectations.

6. **School Leadership:**

At North Star, the principal of each campus is ultimately responsible for student achievement. Because of this high level of responsibility, North Star is highly selective about its principals. All of the current principals have been with North Star for at least seven years and are true instructional masters in their practice. The principals run the professional development for staff, manage school culture, handle student discipline, and guide instructional practices.

There also is a focus to ensure more instructional one-on-one assistance by developing a cohort of teachers into Rising Leaders. These individuals provide an additional layer of support for the newest teachers in North Star. All Rising Leaders go through their own extensive professional development in identifying key levers to improve teaching, giving feedback, having difficult conversations, reviewing lesson plans, etc. Each Rising Leader is a full time teacher who simultaneously supports one or more teachers in his/her development.

For the instructional leaders to be able to do the hard work of coaching teachers and owning student achievement, they need a second leader to take care of all of the other matters at a school. Each campus has one principal and a director of operations to support the campus and manage all of the operational big picture and details. She or he write state reports, manage facilities, coordinate schedules, run lunches and breakfasts and take care of all of the many details in a day that can cause a more traditional principal to get distracted from focusing on student learning. It's through this model that the schools are able to really have principals lead the academic systems around data-driven instruction, lesson planning, professional development and observation and feedback.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 11

Test: HSPA

Edition/Publication Year: New Jersey/Annual

Publisher: Measurement, Inc.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	100	82	86	85	86
% Advanced	27	18	18	20	20
Number of students tested	15	28	28	26	22
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	7	2	1	1
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	14	7	4	5
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	100	90	94	100	89
% Advanced	33	19	16	20	20
Number of students tested	12	21	25	23	18
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	100	79	88	85	86
% Advanced	23	13	16	20	20
Number of students tested	13	23	25	20	22
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes: The following numbers are guesstimates and will need to be finalized by looking into a back log of information that was not present when completing this application: 2004-2007 advanced school data and advanced subgroup data for Black and FRL students; and the # of Latino students for 2004-2005.

Subject: Reading

Grade: 11

Test: HSPA

Edition/Publication Year: New Jersey/Annual

Publisher: Measurement, Inc.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	100	89	96	96	91
% Advanced	13	11	11	10	10
Number of students tested	15	27	28	24	22
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	5	4	1	1
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	19	14	4	5
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	100	91	96	87	94
% Advanced	8	14	12	10	10
Number of students tested	12	21	25	23	18
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	100	88	96	100	91
% Advanced	15	13	12	10	10
Number of students tested	13	24	25	20	22
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0

Notes: The following numbers are guesstimates and will need to be finalized by looking into a back log of information that was not present when completing this application: advanced school and FRL and Black subgroups, # of Latino students in 2004-2005.

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 5

Test: NJASK

Edition/Publication Year: New Jersey/Annual

Publisher: Measurement, Inc.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	85	81	73	85	
% Advanced	28	16	15	28	
Number of students tested	149	115	123	122	
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	
Number of students alternatively assessed	12	10	6	8	
Percent of students alternatively assessed	8	9	5	7	
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	84	80	72	85	
% Advanced	28	15	12	4	
Number of students tested	114	100	110	109	
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	84	81	75	81	
% Advanced	26	16	10	4	
Number of students tested	115	99	110	105	
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	88	81	73	88	
% Advanced	31	13	12	6	
Number of students tested	32	16	13	17	
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	75	83			
% Advanced	25				
Number of students tested	12	10			
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	

Notes: NJASK 5-7 only started in 2005-2006. The following numbers are guesstimates and will need to be finalized by looking into a back log of information that was not present when completing this application: 2008 FRL breakdowns, Sped Advanced; 2007 Advanced School and Black, Latino, FRL subgroup breakdowns.

Subject: Reading

Grade: 5

Test: NJASK

Edition/Publication Year: New Jersey/Annual

Publisher: Measurement, Inc.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	73	57	87	85	
% Advanced	7	2	10	4	
Number of students tested	149	115	123	122	
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	
Number of students alternatively assessed	12	10	6	8	
Percent of students alternatively assessed	12	12	5	7	
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	71	55	85	85	
% Advanced	7	3	8	4	
Number of students tested	114	100	115	109	
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	75	61	85	81	
% Advanced	8	2	8	4	
Number of students tested	115	99	110	105	
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	75	38	85	88	
% Advanced	6	0	8	6	
Number of students tested	32	16	13	17	
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	58	27			
% Advanced	8	0			
Number of students tested	12	10			
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0

Notes: The NJASK was not administered in 2004-2005. As a result, there is no test data for that year. The following numbers are guesstimates and will need to be finalized by looking into a back log of information that was not present when completing this application: 06-07 Advanced School and 2007 Subgroup FRL, Black, Latino populations; 07-8 FRL numbers; Sped Advanced.

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 6

Test: NJASK 6

Edition/Publication Year: New Jersey/Annual

Publisher: Measurement, Inc.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	90	82	89	89	
% Advanced	24	21	20	18	
Number of students tested	124	116	123	61	
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	
Number of students alternatively assessed	11	7	10	1	
Percent of students alternatively assessed	9	6	8	2	
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	90	86	89	91	
% Advanced	26	20	20	20	
Number of students tested	95	91	105	55	
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	89	89	87	88	
% Advanced	23	18	19	17	
Number of students tested	107	90	105	48	
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	100	92	90	91	
% Advanced	27	31	20	27	
Number of students tested	15	26	17	11	
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	91		70		
% Advanced	0		0		
Number of students tested	11		10		
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	

Notes: NJASK 5-7 started as a statewide assessment in 2006. The following numbers are guesstimates and will need to be finalized by looking into a back log of information that was not present when completing this application: 2007 Advanced School and FRL, Black, Latino, SpEd subgroup breakdowns.

Subject: Reading

Grade: 6

Test: NJASK 6

Edition/Publication Year: New Jersey/Annual

Publisher: Measurement, Inc.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	81	74	92	94	
% Advanced	5	5	7	12	
Number of students tested	124	116	123	61	
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	
Number of students alternatively assessed	11	7	10	1	
Percent of students alternatively assessed	9	6	8	2	
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	81	74	90	93	
% Advanced	4	6	6	13	
Number of students tested	95	91	95	55	
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	81	72	93	94	
% Advanced	5	6	6	13	
Number of students tested	107	90	100	48	
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	80	81	92	91	
% Advanced	7	4	5	0	
Number of students tested	15	26	23	11	
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	55				
% Advanced	0				
Number of students tested	11		10		
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	0	0	0		
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	

Notes: The following numbers are guesstimates and will need to be finalized by looking into a back log of information that was not present when completing this application: 2007 Advanced School and FRL, Black, Latino, SpEd subgroup breakdown.

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 7

Test: NJASK 7

Edition/Publication Year: New Jersey/Annual

Publisher: Measurement, Inc.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	88	91	96	85	
% Advanced	29	26	30	8	
Number of students tested	118	95	53	40	
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	
Number of students alternatively assessed	10	7	3	7	
Percent of students alternatively assessed	8	7	6	18	
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	86	91	95	86	
% Advanced	25	27	29	8	
Number of students tested	87	77	45	37	
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	86	91	94	86	
% Advanced	25	27	28	6	
Number of students tested	94	79	45	37	
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	96	88			
% Advanced	46	25			
Number of students tested	24	16			
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	50				
% Advanced	0				
Number of students tested	10				
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	

Notes: NJ ASK 5-7 started as a statewide assessment in 2006. The following numbers are guesstimates and will need to be finalized by looking into a back log of information that was not present when completing this application: 2007 advanced data for the school; subgroup breakdown for FRL, Black, Latino.

Subject: Reading

Grade: 7

Test: NJASK 7

Edition/Publication Year: New Jersey/Annual

Publisher: Measurement, Inc.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	90	91	98	93	
% Advanced	27	24	20	13	
Number of students tested	118	95	53	40	
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	
Number of students alternatively assessed	10	7	3	7	
Percent of students alternatively assessed	9	7	6	18	
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	86	92	98	92	
% Advanced	22	26	20	14	
Number of students tested	87	77	45	37	
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	88	90	98	91	
% Advanced	26	24	20	11	
Number of students tested	94	79	45	35	
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	96	94			
% Advanced	33	25			
Number of students tested	24	16			
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	20				
% Advanced	0				
Number of students tested	10				
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	

Notes: NJASK 5-7 only started as a state assessment in 2006. The following numbers are guesstimates and will need to be finalized by looking into a back log of information that was not present when completing this application: 2007 Advanced group as well as the FRL, Black, and Latino subgroup breakdowns.

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 8 Test: NJASK/GEPA

Edition/Publication Year: New Jersey/Annual

Publisher: Measurement, Inc.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	96	98	66	75	74
% Advanced	66	42	6	8	8
Number of students tested	94	41	32	31	35
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	5	3	6	1	3
Percent of students alternatively assessed	5	7	19	3	9
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	96	97	66	78	85
% Advanced	65	47	3	8	8
Number of students tested	75	36	29	29	30
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	96	97	64	73	70
% Advanced	67	36	7	8	8
Number of students tested	79	33	28	28	28
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	93				
% Advanced	60				
Number of students tested	15				
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0

Notes: In 2007, the state changed the test from the GEPA to NJASK for the 8th grade statewide assessment. The following numbers are guesstimates and will need to be finalized by looking into a back log of information that was not present when completing this application: 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 advanced percentages for the school as well as for the FRL and Black subgroups.

Subject: Reading

Grade: 8 Test: NJASK 8/GEPA

Edition/Publication Year: New Jersey/Annual

Publisher: Measurement, Inc.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	99	100	92	90	85
% Advanced	21	20	9	15	10
Number of students tested	94	40	32	31	35
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	5	3	6	1	3
Percent of students alternatively assessed	5	8	19	3	9
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	99	100	86	93	92
% Advanced	19	23	10	15	10
Number of students tested	75	35	29	29	30
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	99	100	79	92	85
% Advanced	22	13	7	15	10
Number of students tested	79	32	28	28	28
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	100				
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	15				
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0

Notes: The state switched from using the GEPA to the NJASK as its assessment in 2007. The following numbers are guesstimates and will need to be finalized by looking into a back log of information that was not present when completing this application: 2006 and 2005 advanced school percentage and FRL and Black subgroup percentages.