Abbott Implementation Resource Guide

Standards Based Reform

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Giving our kids a fighting chance

About the Authors

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About Education Law Center

ELC was established in 1973 to advocate on behalf of New Jersey's public school children for access to an equal and adequate education under state and federal laws through litigation, policy initiatives, constituency building, and action research.

ELC serves as counsel to the plaintiffs in the Abbott v. Burke case – more than 350,000 preschool and school-age children in 30 urban school districts across the state. The *NY Times* (2002) said that Abbott "may be the most significant education case" since *Brown v. Board of Education. Abbott* has also been called the most important NJ court ruling in the 20th century (*NJ Lawyer*, 2000).

The landmark Abbott IV (1997) and Abbott V (1998) rulings directed the State to implement a comprehensive set of remedies to improve education in the Abbott districts, including universal preschool, standards-based education, adequate foundational funding and facilities, whole school reform, and supplemental or "at risk" programs. ELC is now

working to hold the State and districts accountable for effective, and timely implementation of these remedies.

About the Abbott Implementation Resource Guides

With generous support from the Victoria Foundation and the Schumann Fund for New Jersey, ELC commissioned a set of resource guides designed to facilitate the effective implementation of the Abbott programs and reforms at the school and district levels. The purpose of the guides is to provide school management teams, central office staff, and others with information on the legal requirements, latest research, and effective strategies for implementation of the Abbott remedies. The topics covered include: Standards Based Reform, Parent and Community Involvement, Special Education, and Bilingual Education. All of the guides are available on ELC's website: www.edlawcenter.org.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

As a school in an Abbott district, standards based education presents you with both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, holding high expectations for teaching and learning, including content and performance standards, quality curriculum, and well designed assessments, is the most promising way we know of to level the playing field for students, regardless of color, ethnicity, or socio-economic background. (See next section for definition of standards) This is, after all, at the heart of Abbott's purpose – to eliminate the educational disadvantage of underserved students in New Jersey's public schools. As a result of the Abbott litigation, money and programs are available where once they did not exist, or were inadequately funded. Applying these resources to standards of practice, curriculum, and student work can spell success for even the poorest kids. This is not just another theory. It has worked elsewhere, and it can work for the Abbott districts. However, as you well know, there are many challenges to eliminating such longstanding disadvantage. We cannot control for all conditions that affect students in and out of school. Nor can we simply *will* away educational deficits that may have accumulated over the years. We can, however, control the standard to which we hold ourselves, our colleagues, and our students while undertaking these very real challenges. Doing this right means hard work – perhaps no harder than you work now, but likely in very different ways and with the promise of a better result for your efforts in the long run.

Standards based education has the potential to be more than a set of curriculum standards and accompanying assessments, but not without a dramatic shift in the way we have traditionally thought about "doing school." The mere existence of standards doesn't guarantee high quality instruction or student learning. Deeply entrenched habits of administration, budgeting, time management, teaching practice, professional development, and social service delivery haven't gotten the job of educational improvement done yet. So, why would we assume that setting a goal, the standards, will automatically lead to change? Perhaps more to the point, as educators we know that most skills are not innate; they are learned over time, and with great effort. This is as true of adults as it is of children. Continuous improvement requires that educators learn new

things – content, skills, leadership and perhaps most of all, that everyone in the school system, not just the student, is a learner and a teacher.

In this guide, our goal is to provide information, support and practical tools that may help you to design, implement, and evaluate your school's standards based educational program. This paper is broader in scope than others in the Abbott Implementation Resource Guide series. We view it as the central piece of the series because standards and instructional improvement are essential to Abbott's goal of eliminating educational disadvantage. Other topic areas-- bilingual education, special education, and parent and community involvement for example-- are crucial pieces to getting the job done as subsets of the overall school program. In order to work, a comprehensive, standards based educational program must, by definition, be the organizing structure upon which the school program operates. Moreover, research suggests that the focus of operations *within* a standards based program should be instruction and instructional improvement. We'll talk about the essential components of such a program – the pieces that experience has shown must be in place, though the means of getting them in place can and *should* vary. Wherever possible, we'll frame this outline of "essential components" in terms of the roles administrators, teachers, students, parents and community agencies can or in some cases *must* play.

We will also discuss resources – funds, people and time. You'll notice that throughout the chapter we'll refer you to tools and out-takes within the text and in the appendices. Some of these are vignettes from the field – the actual experience of schools or districts doing this work and facing challenges very similar to those faced by Abbott districts. No two schools are identical, and no one school or district can be held up as THE model to follow, point for point, in developing a high quality, high expectations standards based program. All we have to learn from is the best thinking on the subject, and the success and mistakes of those who are doing the work. We have tried to pull those together for you here.

As a member of an Abbott district, your school is entitled to a good deal of money. Indeed, since 1997-98, every Abbott district has been funded at parity with average regular education spending in New Jersey's wealthier districts. Beyond parity, however, the extra funds needed to adequately support the unique needs and programs in

Abbott districts have not been easily obtained. Unfortunately, red tape, some inconsistencies in state funding criteria, particularly around school based needs assessments, and state efforts to redefine what can and cannot be funded, have limited disbursement of adequate additional funding up until now. However, State resistance to needed funding is likely to diminish through ongoing stakeholder review of regulations and guidance on budgeting and funding, and most importantly, as a result of unequivocal direction from the Supreme Court in *Abbott X* that for school year 2004-05 and beyond Abbott districts have the absolute "right. . . to request supplemental funding for all demonstrably needed programs, services, and positions and to appeal the denial of such requests, as provided for in *Abbott V*." We understand that your school can't just wait for this to happen. You have students at their desks *today*. You might even be a bit skeptical, and understandably so, about the likelihood that funding to the schools will be sufficient, given the drawn-out history of Abbott litigation. We at the Education Law Center are nonetheless optimistic about the new willingness and capacity of districts to effectively challenge the State when funding decisions are made contrary to local interests. Moreover, in addition to further litigation, *Abbott X* underscored the need for direct collaboration between the DOE, ELC and all stakeholders. The Court directed the ongoing involvement of such stakeholders in reviewing and improving State regulations and guidance. The regulations promulgated by the Commissioner on September 9, 2003, reflect such involvement and, although still deficient in too many ways, offer guidance to local districts that is improved over previous State direction.

We hope this guide will be a useful tool as you move forward and try to make the most of the opportunities Abbott offers.

BACKGROUND

What Do We Mean By "Standards?"

When policy makers, educators and increasingly, local and national media, talk about standards, they are most often referring to content standards. Because the Abbott Court opinions and subsequent Abbott legislation focus primarily on content standards, this guide will do the same. It should be noted, however that there are actually different kinds of standards, the combination of which can work powerfully well toward

improvement. It is beyond the scope of this guide to address the potential for implementing multiple types of standards, but we hope that at some point in your continuous improvement process your school district and individual schools will expand their definition of standards. Indeed, many would argue that content standards alone, without performance, opportunity to learn (OTL), and system-delivery standards, cannot get the job of improvement done.[1]

Content standards are fixed goals for learning. They answer the question: "What should children know and be able to do?[2] A child's performance is measured according to these set standards – a different approach from simply comparing children to one another. The desired learning outcomes are fixed, and the instruction varies depending upon what each child needs to meet the standards.[3]

Some History

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education issued a plea to all Americans to promote and support massive education reform. As a result of their landmark report, "A Nation at Risk," state and national policy makers decided it was time to mobilize behind the effort. "A Nation at Risk" pointed out great variability in courses, (district to district, school to school, classroom to classroom), reported that a large percentage of students, especially among minorities and the poor, were dramatically

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[1] Performance Standards tell us what student work should look like if it meets the standards. They lay out the levels of performance and the acceptable kinds of evidence that the content standards have been met. The content standards can be thought of as the rail and the performance standards tell you how high you have to jump. Performance standards require that you examine student and teacher work using a process of moving back and forth between the content standards, student work, and teacher work, adjusting the standards upward in view of the outcomes. Developing performance standards with teachers, school leaders, parents and students can be one of the most powerful activities to improve teaching and learning.

Opportunity to learn (OTL) or delivery standards describe the conditions necessary for students to achieve the content standards, such as access to materials, time, resources available and knowledgeable teachers. This set of standards is crucial for the adults as well. Teachers and school leaders, not just students, need rich opportunities to learn.

System-delivery standards set out criteria for establishing the quality of a school district's capacity and performance in educating all students in the subject matter set out in the content standards. System delivery standards indicate to what degree a district ensures that its students are being well educated and its long-term educational goals are being achieved. (New Standards Project; National Council on Education and the Economy, 1997).

[2] (New Standards Project; National Council on Education and the Economy, 1997; p.3)
[3] (Deanna Burney, 2001) Burney is a former NJ principal at the elementary, middle, and senior high levels a former assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction in NJ, a member of the OERI funded High Performance Learning Communities Project in NYC District 2, and currently a Senior Research Investigator with the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE).

underserved. Now, 49 of the 50 states have statewide educational standards for core subject areas, most have developed their own statewide assessments for accountability purposes, and standards and assessments have become the driving force in efforts to improve equity and excellence.

In 1996, the NJ state legislature joined the national effort towards "standards-based education" by adopting the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. Content Standards were developed for each of these seven curriculum areas:

- Arts (Visual and Performing)
- Comprehensive Health and Physical Education
- Language Arts Literacy
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies
- World Languages

In addition, New Jersey included "Cross-Content Workplace Readiness" standards, which were designed to span all areas of the curriculum. These standards involve career planning; developing interpersonal skills, self-management skills, and good work habits; using information and technology; and solving problems that require the use of critical thinking and decision-making.

Does this mean that New Jersey had no educational standards for these content areas prior to 1996? Of course not. But, "A Nation at Risk" pointed out the great variability in what was taking place in schools, and the great need for figuring out what would constitute a "quality" educational experience leading to a "thorough and efficient" education for all students. Prior to the standards movement, in New Jersey as in most states throughout the country, many teachers "covered" a curriculum, and if students didn't get it they just "failed." Under a standards based system, student failure is not an acceptable outcome. Instead, standards require that "all students will succeed." With standards, the job of educators has changed. The point is no longer to identify those students who are succeeding and those who are failing, but rather to figure out how to make it *possible* for all students to succeed. This is the challenge of delivering a

"standards-based education." How can we make it possible for *all* students to truly meet or exceed the content standards?

As New Jersey engaged it's reform efforts, one of the first tasks was to be more specific about the tasks involved in meeting the standards. As originally written, the standards enumerated what students should know and be able to do by the end of Grades 4, 8, and 12. Educators wanted more specific guidance than this about what to teach at each grade level. What were the subtopics under the main headings outlined in the standards? What would teachers have to do to enable students to meet the standards? In response to this call for more clarity, the state proceeded to develop curriculum frameworks for each of the seven content areas.

Up to this point, we have described the theory of standards based education, and a brief history of how the movement began to take root in New Jersey. However, the key word here is "theory." As you know, there is often a gap between an idea, in theory, and the way it is actually played out. The standards and frameworks are *meant* to determine what gets taught in classrooms. Textbooks and other curriculum materials are *supposed* to function as supports for teaching to the standards. But, in many New Jersey schools, and schools throughout the country, it doesn't actually happen that way. Instead, someone (often just the publisher) determines that a certain textbook or program "meets the standards," and once the program is adopted, teachers move through the materials, confident that the standards are being "covered." This is particularly problematic when, as is the traditional mode, teachers select from among the activities in the text and "skip over" some of the more challenging material. Then, the materials are often blamed when students do not perform well on the tests. It wouldn't be acceptable in any other profession to simply blame materials or the client for poor results, and accept no responsibility for the outcome. As professionals, educators are entitled to expect quality materials, quality training, and a supportive environment in which to practice their profession. In return, we must expect to be held accountable for the outcome of our efforts. If we don't have what we need to do our job well, then we may need to go through the channels or make the noise necessary to have those needs met. Abbott programs and funds are meant to help meet those needs.

(Out-take)

The Education Law Center and a Brief History of Abbott Litigation
Established in 1973, the Education Law Center advocates for the underserved children in New Jersey public schools. The Center operates from the belief that: *One way to help students in districts that have a disproportionate number of struggling students is to assure that they are provided access to an equal and adequate education under state and federal laws.* With this goal in mind, in 1981, the ELC filed the now landmark Abbott v. Burke against the State of New Jersey on behalf of disadvantaged urban students, to assure equal opportunity and adequate programs. Since then, there have been a series of NJ Supreme Court decisions backing efforts to improve the conditions for learning in the "Abbott" districts listed here:

Asbury Park	Bridgeton	Burlington City	Camden
East Orange	Elizabeth	Garfield	Glouchester City
Harrison	Hoboken	Jersey City	Keansburg
Long Branch	Millville	Neptune Twp.	New Brunswick
Newark	Orange	Passaic	Paterson
Pemberton Twp.	Perth Amboy	Phillipsburg	Pleasantville
Trenton	Union City	Vineland	West New York

The Abbott litigation was designed to help level the playing field for struggling students. More than 275,000 school-aged children and 55,000 preschoolers stand to benefit from the Abbott programs and reforms. Abbott programs are designed to improve student learning by providing better curriculum aligned to the standards, by improving teacher knowledge and skills, and providing in-school and home/community supports for students as they progress from pre-school through high school and beyond. Subsequent Abbott litigation has led to parity funding to equalize per-student expenditures, to improve school facilities, provide quality early education programs, access to technology, and support programs for students and their families.

ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The term "accountability" has become a buzzword of education policy; so much so that its meaning and importance can be lost. Basically, accountability involves asking whether the job is getting done, and since the success of all students is at the root of standards based education, "the job" here refers to whether students are learning and successfully meeting the standards. Unfortunately, accountability is often framed in only one direction -- schools are held accountable to districts, and districts to states for reaching the standards at some scaled rate of improvement. We see plenty of accountability for results, but very little accountability for provision of resources and supports to accomplish those results.

One unfortunate side-effect of high-stakes accountability environments, (particularly where instruction, curriculum and assessments are not well aligned, or where teachers are not given the support they need to teach a standards based

curriculum), is that schools have a hefty incentive to conduct crash test prep. Accountability is not a bad word – it is necessary that professionals be accountable for their practice. But, when standardized tests are just a comparative tool between schools, or when they're wielded like a stick to flog already struggling schools without any accompanying support, it's not surprising that districts, principals or teachers often feel driven to merely drill and cover material. Of course, this isn't going to help kids – it's a short term response to frustration and desperation.

(Out-take)

In one Kentucky high school, in a high-stakes accountability district implementing standards based educational reform, a group of researchers arrived to observe classrooms and interview teachers. The teachers on their interview list were unavailable, however, because they were "doing test camp." In the cafeteria, approximately 200 students were assembled. The lights were dimmed and at the front of the room was a movie screen with slides of various art works, architectural wonders, literary figures and other assorted pictures popping up. The group of teachers at the front of the room took turns "drilling" information about the slides. When asked later what the "camp" was all about, the principal and teachers explained that there was no way they could fit humanities into the curriculum to the extent that the standards required, and since students would be tested on humanities, this was a way to guarantee some exposure and "maybe some of it sticks for the test."

Assessments, whatever their design, are the yardstick of accountability. Ideally, these assessments should also provide useful data to educators about how to revise curriculum and practice for improved student outcomes. So, another of New Jersey's challenges as it undertook a shift to standards based education was to design a testing system that would assess progress and provide information about where change was needed. The tests had to demonstrate the new emphasis on, not only skills, but also problem solving and reasoning; and the scoring of open-ended problems had to model the use of rubrics for evaluating student responses.[4]

As New Jersey continues its rollout of assessments, improves test items, and makes other changes; and as national testing becomes more aggressive, at least one trend has become apparent: The effort put into designing tests and preparing students to take the tests is far greater than any efforts to interpret test results at the district, school, classroom or individual student level. To make the enormous testing expense and effort

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[4] The standards, the curriculum frameworks, sample tests, a scoring guide, and samples of student responses to open-ended questions are available on the NJ Department of Education's website, www.NJDOE.Gov.

worthwhile, we MUST find ways to use test results in a way that goes beyond comparing districts, schools, and teachers. How can test results be reported, and to whom, so that instructional practice and decisions about content can be made based on what the students actually do and do not know and understand? How can test results be used to shape future learning and to plan professional development, instead of just being used as a gauge for monitoring collective performance? How do we refocus the discussion in a positive, creative way, rather than on the system of rewards of sanctions? Test data can be used to improve student achievement, but educators need to be taught how to interpret and use data for this purpose. Data is currently underutilized, largely because we have focused too heavily on making schools accountable to their districts and to the state, without making the state and the districts accountable for gathering and organizing data in user-friendly formats, presenting it to schools, and helping schools to interpret the data and use it as part of their decision-making process. This is what Richard Elmore calls a relationship lacking in "reciprocal accountability."   Similarly, principals have focused too heavily on making teachers accountable for student performance, without providing the necessary instructional leadership such as modeling, focused professional development and constructive evaluation of teaching practice. Overall, this uni-directional accountability is not only unfair to those in the accountability hot-seat, but also squanders the opportunity to learn from the wealth of information that could be mined from a well-designed and reported student assessment. Unfortunately, in spite of the original intent of assessments (to assure that all students would achieve educational standards), the state continues to use data for primarily comparative purposes, missing the opportunity to help struggling schools use this data to improve student achievement.

The next section of this guide gets down to the nitty-gritty – what experience suggests are some of the essential components of a high expectations, standards based instructional program for school improvement. We'll walk through some ideas for conducting your school's evaluation and provide some practical tools you can use in this process. Just as we've discussed the importance of making the standards and instruction central to the daily work of your school, it is equally important that the standards and instructional growth be a central question in your evaluation and a central objective to your plan as you look forward.

ESSENTIALS

Abbott litigation has resulted in new funding and new possibilities for New Jersey's urban districts. Careful and thoughtful planning about how to use those funds and realize those possibilities is essential. This means serious evaluation of the current school program. This doesn't necessarily mean starting from scratch. In fact, "throwing the baby out with the bathwater" rarely works and may just contribute to educators' frustration with the seemingly endless series of fragmented "new" reforms to which they are subject. For example, the "Children Achieving Challenge," in Philadelphia attempted to implement wholesale change with inadequate resources, and in a political environment that lacked the buy-in or staying power to foster those changes taking root. Without the resources and commitment necessary to sustain such an ambitious reform program, Children Achieving, and other initiatives like it tend to lose crucial momentum. For more about the Children Achieving Challenge, see Appendix A.

What can Abbott districts learn from the experience of Philadelphia and other districts like it? First, that your district, and everyone working within it needs to *own* the change process. Abbott isn't something being *done* to the district or *dropped into* schools. It isn't another reform model, it's the *means* to make improvements, some of which you may already be attempting to make, but with inadequate support. It's an opportunity to put resources, programming, and political attention where educators and kids need it most. Improving on what you do, with more resources than any other urban district in the country, doesn't have to be just one more re-invention attempt dropped into (or onto!) your school. Rather than starting from scratch, it is possible to build on what is good and think about next steps for the things that are not serving your school's purpose and goals.

Abbott implementation policies have undergone dramatic changes in the past year. The organizing principle for school improvement has shifted away from reliance on whole school reform models, to school and central office-based improvements guided by the Core Curriculum Content Standards. As the District assumes an increasingly supportive and coordinating role, the role of whole school reform models is bound to change. You may choose to continue your school's relationship with a reform model,

attempt to modify your work with the model, or you may decide to discontinue the relationship all together. The point is, no matter what model your school chose during the past few years, you now have a better idea of what has worked and what is not working at all. Whole school reform models were never intended to be an end in themselves. They are supposed to be an organizing tool – *one* of the *means* by which standards based educational improvement can happen. As you conduct an evaluation of your school, and with the district, develop a plan for the coming months and years, consider how well your whole school reform model suits the needs you identify and your goals for the future. If every question you ask yourselves, and every element of your plan serves the purpose of meeting the standards and instructional improvement, your whole school reform model must do the same. For a guide that may help in your evaluation of the "fit" of your whole school reform model, see Appendix B.

PROGRAM EVALUATION AND PLANNING: WHERE ARE WE, WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE, AND WHAT DO WE NEED TO GET THERE?

In the past, evaluation and planning fell to the individual school (when it occurred at all). New state policies (as of 2002-2003) include more instrumental involvement of the district and state in evaluation, planning and budgeting for improvement. This is not to say that the process will be taken away from schools. Rather, the goal is for district and state supports to assist schools in this process, to ensure that it is as little drain on school's human and financial resources as possible, while also ensuring that it includes components crucial to continuous improvement. As the NJDOE workgroups hash out the details of changes to Abbott regulations, including the roles all players will assume in the evaluation and planning process, here are some thoughts to keep in mind.

Evaluating the existing school program and using that information to design a plan is crucial to improvement. A key term here and one that you'll see repeatedly throughout this guide is "focus." Evaluation and planning means asking "what is our focus now, what should it be, and what steps must we take to maintain that focus and reach our goals?"

Another key term is "alignment." For all pieces of the improvement process to work, they need to work with, not against or in isolation from the other pieces.

Standards, instruction, curriculum, assessments, expectations and accountability need to be aligned if they are to reinforce one another and have the desired outcome. Evaluation and needs assessment is about looking at the details of the school program and reflecting on whether those details are in keeping with and directed toward the standards based instructional improvement focus. In addition to the details though, it's also important to take a step back (look at the forest *and* the trees) to ensure that the pieces are aligned to create a coherent program.

(Out-take)

Time off Task
These events took place over the course of one school day. No one incidence is that bad, but consider the cumulative effects of time off task: -During first period, a double blocked math period missed a half hour for math because it was time to
"Drop Everything and Read." Good for language arts, but what about math? -In one class, the social worker stopped by. The teacher told the students to continue working on their own so she could talk to the social worker... for 16 minutes.
-In another class, two teachers combined their classes and gave the students seat work to do so they (the teachers) could order items from educational catalogs. Their order was due the next day and they said this was the only way they could get the job done. -A second grade ESL class had learned a song for a religious holiday. They were going from room to
room, with children in costume, passing out candy. In the class I was visiting, instruction stopped, the children came in, sang in Spanish, passed out candy, and left. No one explained why they were there or what the costumes were about. As a result their visit had no meaning, and it was very disruptive.
-In another class, the period was about to end and the math lesson concluded abruptly because the prep teacher was coming...but the prep teacher didn't show up. Instead of finishing the math lesson, the teacher told the students they could color.
-One class stopped early to have a birthday party. -In another class, instruction stopped because the whole school had a fire drill. -Near the end of the day, another lesson was nearing completion. The teacher was getting ready to
summarize what the students had been doing, so that things would make sense. Instead, she was called to a meeting and a second teacher came in to "cover the class." The new teacher did what she could, but used a different approach. The students listened politely, but were obviously confused.

Making an Overall Assessment of Your School: The Big Picture

As you well know, schools are busy places. It's unusual to have time to reflect about work in progress because everyone is so busy just *doing* the work. If and when educators grab the time to think about school in a reflective manner, the conversation can go in a hundred directions, depending on what people have been doing or thinking about on that particular day. The first lesson here is not to "grab" time, but to make time; not for hollow, "touchy-feely" processing that will make the veteran teacher groan, but for nuts and bolts needs assessment and planning. It's not easy to run a productive planning

meeting, and even harder to manage a change process on the scale that we're talking about here. There are right and wrong ways to get a job done, especially where human and financial resources are limited (and when aren't they?) Project management is a distinct and recognized professional field. These are experts who specialize in helping to plan and manage change. We strongly suggest that you seek professional help for "the process." Leaving the process or project management to the experts will mean less time and energy away from the job at which you are expert – education. There couldn't be a more appropriate way to spend Abbott funds. However you go about the program evaluation/needs assessment and overall planning process though, you'll need to do some initial information gathering – just a way to get your bearings and refine your assessment and planning goals. One way to get the conversation underway, and a first piece of data for you to generate, might be to ask the focus questions: "What is our focus now, what should it be, and what do we think needs to happen in order for us to achieve and maintain that focus?" This is call a "gap analysis," and a consultant project manager can use the information you provide in answer to these questions to map a plan for bridging "the gap" between where your school is now and where you want it to be.

A few things to consider as you work through the focus questions:

We have already emphasized that the overall focus of the school program should be standards based instructional improvement. What does this mean for the programs and initiatives that make-up the whole school program? Some schools have opted to focus broadly on all the things that need to be done, trying to address as much as possible at once. Sometimes the broad focus is intentional, because there are many perceived problems or needs and the assumption is that they are all equally serious and therefore must all be addressed *now*. At times, this bulk approach to programs or initiatives is based solely on budgetary considerations – "We had the opportunity to get the funds for x, y or z, so we thought we'd better go for it." Sometimes there are forces inside or outside the school pulling and pushing in different directions. For example: Maybe the district wants a focus on literacy, but several teachers are in an IKE grant focusing on math and science; the district has a community grant to foster the arts; a large bilingual population calls for outreach programs for parents; fights in the schoolyard have led to

calls for conflict resolution programs; and many new teachers need help with classroom management. No doubt, these are all legitimate concerns. However, we would argue that it is not possible to stretch school energy and focus in this many directions and still do it all well. This many programs and mini-initiatives going on at once makes for a less effective overall program because it lacks coherence.   Students and educators often experience this kind of school environment as fragmented and frenzied, with too much going on to be reflective or see the "big picture."

Experience and research suggest that when a school, and in particular a principal, focuses on too many projects, few if any of them get the energy, resources and attention necessary to succeed. But when focus is directed on one school-wide priority such as literacy, more often than not other areas of concern, including other content areas, benefit. Essentially, the infrastructure and expertise a school must develop in order to implement, for example, a high quality literacy initiative, tends to cross over into many other aspects of the school program.

This is where the central office and principal's roles are crucially important. Principal and central office roles are discussed in greater detail later in this paper, but we will introduce the topic here.

 Traditionally, the principal was seen as a kind of "gatekeeper" whose primary job was to screen teachers from external and administrative distractions.   Now the gatekeeper's primary role must be to develop and protect internal coherence. For example, instructional facilitators can be a great resource, but if four different instructional facilitators were working independently of one another in a single cluster of teachers they would be less effective, and their instructional support would be less coherent than if their efforts were coordinated. (Deanna Burney 2002). It is the principal's job to know who is in the building, and to make sense of all these improvement efforts, to be sure they are integrated with one another and with the school's purpose, and to effectively weed out anything that does not serve this purpose. (See Appendix C for a sample reporting form Principals might use to keep track of professional development, instructional facilitator and mentor teacher activities.)

(Out-take)

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Who's on first?

In a recent research study about professional development in Abbott districts, a director for staff development was interviewed about professional development efforts being made in the district. He told us we would have to talk to all the subject area supervisors individually (language arts, math, science, social studies, special education) because they plan their own professional development, keep track of who attended, etc. We asked specifically what was being done in Early Childhood. "EC has a ton of money," we were told, "and if you find out what they are doing with it, let me know." It was pretty clear that the right hand had no idea what the left hand was doing. "Distributed leadership" and "site-based decision making" are great ideas, but neither implies that there should be no coordination of effort. Guiding and coordinating the effort might prove to be the true challenge for districts whose schools are engaged in making their own important decisions about curriculum, instruction, and professional development.

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This means that central office must be on board with a narrower school focus, and resist overlaying multiple programs and demands on that top priority focus. It also means central office must recognize the principal as a case manager of sorts, responsible for identifying and organizing all improvement efforts, and instructional facilitators within that building. (For more on the roles of principal and central office, see the Roles section later in this guide.) In addition to asking the focus questions, it may be helpful to take something of a compass reading to figure out how far along your school actually is in the standards implementation process as demonstrated by classroom practice.

The following tool is intended for use by principals, but may be equally useful as a group exercise. A word of caution: This tool is not meant to be used by those outside the school to "label" a school's progress, nor to scrutinize individuals publicly. Instead, it should be used by or with school personnel as a way to evaluate where they are in the improvement process.

Standards Implementation Evaluation Rubric

In order to appropriately asses the level of progress that the school has made in its standards-based curriculum implementation efforts, the principal and leadership team will need to be able to identify the characteristics of standards-based curriculum implementation at both the classroom and school wide level. Some of the key elements of full implementation of standards-based instruction that fully engages students are:

- Teachers teach a high level standards-based curriculum to all students.

- Teachers interact with students in ways that facilitate student higher-order thinking skills.

- Teachers adapt curriculum and instruction to student background to "stretch" all students without watering down or making unreachable the content and strategies.

- Teachers can identify those students meeting standards, those in need of help, and what plans are in place for all students.

- Teachers connect content material with other disciplines.

- Teachers facilitate problem solving using multiple perspectives and strategies.

- Students engage in inquiry-based activities. There is an increasing effort to teach in a hands-on constructivist manner ("Constructivism" is an approach to education that views the teacher as more a facilitator of learning than an instructor of pre-determined skills and facts. Students are encouraged to take more control of their course of study than in conventional classrooms. They are also encouraged to work in teams, to tackle problems that do not necessarily have one answer and work on long-range projects.).

- Students can talk knowledgeably about how their work does/does not meet standards-based criteria.

- Students use technology to gather data and information and solve open-ended problems or complete open-ended assignments.

- Students develop and investigate problems or issues, which they themselves have generated.

- Students record, analyze, interpret and present data or information to communicate both their problem solving processes and outcomes.

- Students work in teams, as well as individually, for learning and problem solving.

- Exercises are based upon "real-life" experiences or situations.

- Physical arrangements of the classroom facilitate group discussions while being flexible enough to allow for individual study and research.

- Classroom walls display meaningful student work and content standards and rubrics (criteria for judging student work).

The following is a school wide standards implementation assessment – similar to the classroom rubric above, but designed to take stock of the whole school program and provide a general baseline for where the program is on the implementation spectrum.

School Wide Standards Implementation Status Rubric

Level 0:
- Introduction to standards-based curriculum implementation process. No significant staff development conducted.
- No direct external involvement. Unknown status.

Level 1:
- A limited number of the faculty are familiar with standards based curriculum.
- School administration has some knowledge of standards-based reform. Isolated incidents of effort to implement standards-based curriculum.
- School has participated in staff development focused on student achievement data and has begun identifying needs on campus based on disaggregation of data.
- Some faculty attend more than minimum required professional development sessions.
- No movement of children in bottom two quartiles and little to no focus on standards based curriculum.

Level 2:
- School has received information about standards based curriculum and a portion of the faculty has implemented some standards based materials although not consistently.
- School offered the opportunities for ongoing staff development and has participated to some extent in these opportunities. Teachers formally meet in at least one configuration (grade levels, vertical teams, departments) to discuss curriculum alignment.
- School has received some staff development on assessments aligned to standards-based curriculum. (Some) assessments are being connected to standards.
- School has an awareness of the need for student support as the curriculum changes.
- Less than half of the instruction is hands-on inquiry based.

Level 3:
- A majority of faculty and staff have participated in curriculum alignment with national, state and local standards and participate in on-going site-based professional development.
- Faculty is engaged in on-going evaluation and piloting of standards-based curricula.
- Effort of implementation of standards-based instructional strategies.
- Based on identified need, faculty is studying, developing and piloting assessments aligned with standards.
- Faculty is beginning to develop new methods of providing support for students in passing new course requirements.

Level 4:
- Identification of High Quality Standards-Based Curricula.
- Implementation School-Wide.
- Use of standards-based assessment aligned with curriculum. Such as: embedded assessments in curriculum, examination of student work, and site developed assessments.
- Ongoing, long-term standards-based professional development such as: weeklong training institutes, and sessions in schools, collaborative teacher work (planning and development) in vertical teams, grade levels, and school-wide.
- Evidence of effort to support students in passing new course requirements and/or standards-based curriculum implementation.

(Deanna Burney, 1997)

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP FOR INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT

We have discussed leadership sporadically up to this point, but now, as we begin to talk about getting the daily work of improvement done and individuals' roles in that process, it becomes more important to be explicit about leadership as an essential element of standards based education and instructional improvement. Leadership skills should not be viewed fatalistically -- as something an individual is either born with or not, end of story. Certainly, for some people, leadership comes more naturally than to others. But, just as teaching skills can be learned, so too can leadership. A school needs an instructional leader, and the principal can learn to fulfill that role. A school needs thoughtful, involved educators who contribute to and take responsibility for improvement as leaders and decision makers. Teachers and other members of the school community should be encouraged to develop and contribute their leadership and expertise in creative ways. This is what we increasingly refer to as "distributive leadership" or as Deanna Burney describes it, "stretching knowledge across functions." In simplest terms, the goal is to find out what everyone in the school can bring to the table, and find avenues for everyone to contribute what they know. In all parts of society, including education, the time has come to build new structures for leadership. Elmore (2000) points out that, until recently, the traditional decision-making process in schools has been well defined: "…detailed decisions about what should be taught at any given time, how it should be taught, what students should be expected to learn at any given time, how they should be grouped within classrooms for purposes of instruction, what they should be required to do to demonstrate their knowledge, and, perhaps most importantly, how their learning should be evaluated – resides in individual classrooms, not in the organizations that surround them." (Elmore, 2000 p 5)

Traditionally, teaching has been an autonomous profession, occurring in isolation, behind closed doors. The principal has been manager of the school, taking care of the day-to-day business of running the school, and buffering teacher practice from outside scrutiny, inspection, interference, disruption or criticism. Accountability structures that

accompany standards-based reform are leading to dramatic changes in the way we view instructional practice and characterize quality instructional leadership in schools:

> With standards-based reform, policy reaches, at least in theory, directly into the instructional core of schools, making what actually gets taught a matter of public policy and open political discourse. Content standards… carry the explicit message that students should receive and absorb instruction in certain subject areas and on certain topics. Performance standards…assert that schools are accountable for what students learn, meaning that *someone* should manage the conditions of learning in schools so as to produce a given result.
> (Elmore, 2000 p 9)

Elmore elaborates on "managing the process," by saying: "…why not focus leadership on instructional improvement, and define everything else as instrumental to it? The skills and knowledge that matter in leadership…are those that can be connected to, or lead to, the improvement of instruction and student performance."   The theory here is that, *if you keep instruction at the forefront*, this will help in clarifying the roles and tasks for various leaders in your school and district. Community School District 2 in New York City is perhaps the most often cited example of a district that successfully focuses on system-wide instructional improvement.[5] (See Appendix D for a description of District 2 and its instructional improvement strategy)

Drawing upon their research in District 2, Elmore and Burney (1997) suggest a set of seven organizing principles that make the district's approach so distinctive (pp 8-13):

1. *It's about Instruction...and Only about Instruction.* Everyone's work is defined in terms of instructional impact.

2. *Instructional Change is a Long, Multi-stage Process* involving at least four distinct stages – awareness, planning, implementation and reflection.

3. *Shared Expertise is the Driver of Instructional Change.* The enemy is isolation. Get outside advice when you need a fresh perspective. Share expertise that exists among district staff, within schools, and across schools.

4. *Focus on System-wide Improvement*, not disconnected "projects." Make instructional change efforts universal and a routine part of everyone's work.

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[5] The applicability of NYC District 2's continuous improvement strategy to other urban districts is controversial. The fact is, however, that long after Anthony Alvarado left the district (he left D2 and is currently Superintendent of San Diego Schools), D2 scores continue to improve. This would seem to dispel the "charismatic leader" theory posited by some skeptics who predicted that the district's improvement would be short-lived.

Recognize that the goal is to establish a process for continuous improvement unfolding indefinitely over time.

5. *Good Ideas Come from Talented People Working Together.* Former D2 Superintendent Anthony Alvarado notes: "Eighty percent of what is going on now in the district I could never have conceived of when we started this effort." His point: Attract, select, and manage talented people in relation to one another.

6. *Set Clear Expectations, Then Decentralize.* The first step is to create lateral networks among teachers and principals, and select people with a strong interest in instructional improvement. Then set clear expectations for what needs to be done, and decentralize the responsibility. Realize that some teachers prefer to own teaching and learning, and may not want to be involved in governance decisions.

7. *Collegiality, Caring, and Respect.* Improvements in practice require exceptional personal commitment on the part of every person in the organization – not just to instruction, but to each other. People have lives outside of school as well as in school, and their lives are not neatly compartmentalized. The boundaries get blurred. Realize that there are some basic needs of human beings that need to be addressed – their need for personal identification with a common enterprise; their need for help and support in meshing their personal lives with the life of the organization in which they work, and their need to feel that they play a part in shaping the common purposes of the organization. Make them value their professional life as an integral part of themselves as a total human being.

Former D2 Superintendent Alvarado stresses the importance of focusing on establishing a school culture based on norms of commitment, mutual care, and concern. In his own words, Alvarado explained:

"Our vision of instructional improvement depends heavily on people being willing to take the initiative, to take risks, and to take responsibility for themselves, for students, and for each other. You only get this kind of result when people cultivate a deep personal and professional respect and caring for each other. We have set about finding and hiring like-minded people who are interested in making education work for kids. We care about and value each other, even when we disagree. Without collegiality on this level you can't generate the level of enthusiasm, energy, and commitment we have....The worst part of bureaucracy is the dehumanization it brings." (Elmore and Burney, 1997 p 12)

What can Abbott districts learn from the efforts in District 2? First, the seven principles Elmore and Burney distilled from their District 2 research are universally applicable to all school based initiatives. The principles described above are about

creating a healthy, productive professional environment from which all school-based efforts can benefit. Second, when we focus again on standards based instructional improvement in Abbott districts, District 2's successes teach us that the role of leadership in a school district can change dramatically if it is fashioned around the clear goal of instructional improvement -- sustained and deliberate progress towards improvement.

Now that we've discussed the necessity of school-wide program evaluation and planning, and the importance of instructional and distributive leadership, we're ready to look more closely at individual roles within the school. Our goal here is not to compartmentalize individuals. On the contrary, a learning community benefits most from the kind of open-minded organizational approach to roles and leadership that fosters creative solutions rather than rigid boundaries. The following section is meant to lay out the elements of principal and central office roles, as well as those at the core of the daily work, teacher, student and curriculum, that we believe are essential to standards based instructional improvement. Precisely *how* these elements play out, and *who* assumes responsibility for sustaining them can and probably should vary over time. The suggestions and inventory tools included in the next section are intended to help you to reflect upon the roles individuals and groups of individuals play or should play in teaching and learning.

ROLES IN THE INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

Principal

Increasingly, the principal as "instructional leader" is central to thinking about the principal's primary role. Traditionally, the principal has been assigned the role of managing what goes on at school, taking care of the physical plant to make sure that the environment is safe and clean, making sure that students are "in control," informing teachers of district goals and priorities, defending the sanctity of what teachers are doing behind closed doors, shielding the teacher's practice from outside criticism from parents and community (Elmore, 2000). The new vision for the principal has changed in several significant ways: (1) Instead of the principal relaying information to the teachers about what the district goals are, the new challenge is to guide the goal-setting process at school and then communicate school goals to the district. This includes the "gatekeeper of

coherence" role described in the previous section on leadership. (2) The principal needs to have more first hand knowledge of what good quality instruction looks like, and urge those with a similar vision to take leadership roles within the school. (3) With greater emphasis on site-based decision making, the principal must now act as a guide for a new kind of "distributed" leadership which entails encouraging participation by all and ensuring that the interests of all stakeholders are valued in the decision-making process. (4) Instead of allowing teachers to work in isolation, the principal must now assure that teachers are working in a coordinated way to address the standards and align their practices with that of their colleagues at the same and different grade levels.

Significant instructional reform cannot occur at the school level unless the principal embraces this new role of "instructional leader." In this capacity, the principal focuses and guides everyone's attention toward improving instruction and meeting the standards. This does not mean that the windows don't get fixed, the floors don't get cleaned, or that the principal no longer has to calm ruffled feathers among the staff or parents, or respond to requests from the superintendent or school board. But there is a new and primary obligation to know what is happening in classrooms – to literally become familiar with every teacher's practice, and with student work. An effective principal will have to spend significant time in classrooms observing teachers' practice, getting to know them as people, their strengths and improvement needs in teaching and interacting with their students and colleagues.

According to Deanna Burney, a former supervisor of NJ principals herself, principals should spend one half of every day in classrooms. For a list of key indicators principals should look for in their observation of teachers and classrooms, see Appendix E. Principals should provide professional development for teachers based upon what they personally observe and what teachers request, and do so with an eye toward common needs, rather than seeking out many individual "fix-its" that would contribute to the feeling of fragmentation. (See Appendix C for a sample reporting form Principals might use to keep track of professional development, instructional facilitator and mentor teacher activities.) It is important that principals attend professional development programs that the teachers attend and also attend separate professional development targeted at reshaping their own individual leadership skills, and those of their staff. The

principal sets the tone for what goes on at the school, and must model the importance of adult learning and reflective practice for educators in his or her building.

(Out-take)

> **Steamroller**
> The principal can't do it alone. In one Philadelphia elementary school, a new principal come on board. She tried to change everything at once because "there is no time to waste." She fired poor teachers, collected lesson plans to make sure they were standards-based, set up a schedule for handing in samples of student work. She used creative budgeting to establish a computer lab, revamp the library, order new materials for teaching reading, math and science, and bring in outside professional development. She worked long hard hours planning, doing budgets, selecting curriculum materials, writing comments to teachers and personal messages to children. At first the teachers were enthusiastic, and scores went up; but then they started to feel alienated from the change process. In spite of all the good things that were happening to them, they became negative and unhappy. Teachers resigned, refused to take leadership roles because the chief role for school leaders was to communicate the principal's directives. Teacher turnover became a major problem. Scores went down. The principal forgot one key component in the reform process: teamwork.

The basic message for principals who are guiding the work at their schools is to spend as little time as possible on things that are not directly related to instruction, and to work hard to mobilize people behind instructional goals. The inevitable question all of this raises is, "If principals devote most or all of their time to instruction, how will the *other* things get done?" The answer is, it depends. First, it may well be that not *all* of the "other things" are essential. Those that are essential, but peripheral to instruction and student learning, may require delegation to another person or persons -- either a new hire, or as a new responsibility for an existing administrator within the school system. Perhaps the task is appropriate as a volunteer responsibility for a parent or community member? In a truly distributive leadership model, some of the principal's traditional responsibilities may readily shift to others with equal or greater skill in that area (without, of course, merely shifting work unrelated to instruction onto teachers who must also be focused on instruction!) And, in the case of administrative paperwork and responsibilities, new changes to Abbott policy prescribe a more supportive role for the district that includes involvement in budgeting, program assessment, data collection and dissemination, parent and community relations and facilities maintenance oversight. This new role for the district should provide principals with greater freedom to focus on actual instruction and less time on the logistical trappings *surrounding* instruction.

(Out-take)

Getting the Best Price
Sometimes the systems that are in place are just silly. Districts could advocate for sanity to avoid demoralizing and discouraging situations like this: The teacher says, "I can order this book from Amazon. com. It costs $4.97 and will be here in 3 days." The school district says, "No, we need a purchase order and have to go through bids." The teacher says, "Never mind, I'll order it myself."

Obviously, principals cannot control the extent to which their districts support the instructional leader's role, and more particularly, how agreeable the district will be to the new boundaries that the instructional leader must place around school level practice. And, as we will discuss later in this section, the district has been in a difficult position where Abbott provisions are concerned because the state effectively excluded the district from the Abbott implementation process. Forthcoming changes in Abbott implementation policy address this problem. No doubt, however, adjustment to a new and more involved role of the district will be a challenging adjustment for all involved despite the fact that it is a positive and very necessary change. Some district offices will make this transition more easily and eagerly than others. We're back to that "reciprocal accountability" concept again. It is both unfair and inefficient to make improvement demands without providing the resources and support to help those in the accountability hot-seat meet expectations. Nonetheless, in many schools, principals and educators sometimes feel they operate in spite of, rather than with support from their central offices. Perhaps the most that can be said here is that focus and consistency are critical to the success of a rigorous, standards based program of improvement. External constituencies, and sometimes even central office may need to hear "We're about instruction and learning. That's it." We don't claim this conversation will be easy, or that it will be without consequences, but if you generally spend political capital sparingly, this is a good place to spend it.

The following questions are designed as a partial inventory of principal's role in the instructional process. This may be used as a personal reflection tool for principals, or for broader reflection and planning purposes at the district level. Unlike the teacher, student and curriculum inventories that follow, however, its uses for school-based group process are limited since there is only one principal per school. We highly recommend including consideration of the principal's role in your school's needs assessment, and

planning process, however this particular tool may call for too much personalized scrutiny of one person to be fair or productive.

Principal Inventory

Daily Routines:

1. How did the principal come to be at this school? What is his or her prior experience?

2. In a typical week, what percentage of the principal's time is spent: In the company of teachers?; students; parents; other principals?

3. On a typical day, what percentage of the principal's time is spent in the classroom?

4. In a typical week, how often, if at all, does the principal teach?

5. In a typical week, what percentage of the principal's time is spent on discipline? Paperwork? Building administration and maintenance?

6. How does the principal learn about new district and state requirements?

7. How often does the principal communicate with the district office? Who typically initiates this contact? What is this communication usually about?

Teaching and Learning:

1. If there are instructional facilitators in the school, on what are they working/focusing?

2. How many days a week do instructional facilitators work in the school? With whom are they currently working? When was the last time instructional facilitators met with the principal?

3. Does the principal observe classroom instruction? If so, using what criteria?

4. If teachers are observed, when and how do they receive feedback?

5. Does the principal review student work?

6. What criteria does the principal use to evaluate student work?

7. What happens if a teacher's instruction is not what it should be?

8. What happens when a student or students struggle or fail?

9. What are the greatest challenges facing teachers in the school?

10. What are the greatest challenges to student learning in the school?

Professional Development:

1. How are professional development activities for teachers selected?

2. Who participates in professional development activities?

3. Describe the role of mentoring in the school.

4. Does the principal have opportunities to observe other schools and classrooms?

5. To whom can the principal direct concerns or questions about his or her own practice?

6. Describe leadership opportunities within the school. In what ways does the principal encourage "distributed leadership" and participatory decision making?

Accountability:

1. To whom are teachers accountable?

2. To whom is the principal accountable?

3. What happens if a teacher's instruction doesn't improve over time?

4. What is the actual district role in implementing standards and improving student performance? What should it be?

5. How are teachers assigned or selected for your school? Who interviews and has final say in this process?

6. Under what circumstances can a teacher be dismissed from the school? Is this an acceptable policy?

Central Office

So far, this guide has emphasized the importance of teachers and principals thinking of standards based education as more than just a curriculum framework. We have stressed that traditional roles, where teachers teach in isolation, and where principals are building managers, must change in order for standards based educational improvement to happen. There is much more to be said about the core of this work – teachers, materials and students – and a section of this guide devoted to "the core" follows shortly. Here, however, we will focus on the role of the district central office.

Abbott district offices are in transition. Up until recently, the state's implementation of Abbott litigation requirements established no explicit role for the district. In fact, the state virtually wrote the district office out of the decision making process related to Abbott funds and programming. Schools applied to the state for

funding, were required to demonstrate compliance with state requirements to the state, and what limited guidance was available regarding demonstration of need, application and allocation of funds, came directly from the state. Where districts *did* have a role, it was implied. Add to this default role the presence of comprehensive whole school reform models and school based management teams and it's no wonder that even the most visionary superintendents and central offices had few clear avenues for providing support and direction to their schools.

Under Governor McGreevey, wheels are in motion for NJDOE and the Education Law Center to change this and other dysfunctional aspects of existing Abbott regulations *together*. At the time of this writing, NJDOE work groups are revising the Abbott implementation process across the board, with shared school, district and state responsibility for improvement central to the new policies. The following is a brief discussion of some of the responsibilities we would like to see the district assume, most of which are under consideration by the NJDOE work groups.

We have already touched upon the importance of minimizing paperwork and other "administrivia" in the context of freeing up the principal for the role of instructional leader. Presumably, in order to cut back on these requirements, district offices would need to conduct their own needs assessment and planning process to determine essential functions, and identify creative alternatives to current administrative practices. If, like the schools, this process is undertaken with a focus on standards based instructional improvement as a top priority, district and schools would be that much closer to operating in unison toward that goal. A good place to start the evaluation and planning process

within the district office would be to ask school principals and school based management teams how the district can better support standards based instructional improvement.

In addition to whatever direct feedback the district might receive directly from schools, we recommend that district offices consult the District Policy Inventory on the National Center for Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) website (http//wwww.NCTAF.org/resourcedistrict/policy_inventory). Like the Principal, Teacher, Student and Curriculum Inventories included here, the NCTAF Inventory asks questions that may be helpful in evaluating current practice and planning for change. In particular, the site focuses on: 1. Standards; 2. Teacher preparation and professional development; 3. Teacher recruitment; 4. Professional standards of practice and teacher compensation; and 6. Resources, time, principal recruitment and professional development, performance incentives, and technology.

Here are some general recommendations for how the district office can better support schools in their standards based instructional improvement efforts:

- Collect test data and report it to schools in a way that will help schools make improvements to curriculum and teaching. Help schools to interpret and use existing data, and model using data constructively.
- Keep a database of professional development opportunities and requests, actively seeking out and previewing development opportunities that the school principals may not otherwise have time to explore.
- Provide professional development and mentoring opportunities for principal leaders. Support principals and other school leaders as they develop their leadership skills; provide coverage to allow principals to visit other schools and districts, and other professional development opportunities.
- Offer assistance when schools attempt to evaluate the fit of their whole school reform models. Where appropriate, support schools as they make whatever

adjustments may be necessary within their models, recognizing that with such change may also come political or contractual "static."

- Relieve the school's administrative burden by simplifying and offering assistance in the budgetary process, keeping track of finances, looking for funding opportunities and writing grants, contacting vendors to determine "best buys."

- Track opportunities and compliance with Abbott categorical programs (troubleshoot discrepancies and confusion regarding demonstration of need and other requirements).

- Oversee the work in schools, through frequent informal visits and at least one formal review of each school in the district at least once a year. Educators must be accountable to the district, but in fairness and in the interest of improving education, districts should also make it their business to support schools in the work they do. So, in addition to informal visits and formal reviews, the district should provide useful feedback, and follow-through with assistance to those individuals or schools in need of help when reviews are not favorable.

- Recognize that change is continuous, and planning accordingly for continual growth and improvement. This means that the district participates in the planning process, and facilitates growth and improvement by supporting educators with mentorship programs, continuous and well-designed professional development, and a coherent "theory of action" that links together all district and school based efforts at improvement.

There are innumerable ways that a district can put forth a positive effort to help schools focus on instruction, while transmitting the fewest possible distractions. Exactly *how* the district works with schools is less important than that it work *together* with schools sharing responsibility for improving teaching and learning. There will no doubt be an adjustment period, and perhaps a steep learning curve as all of the players in this process get accustomed to their new roles. So, as district offices build capacity to assume their expanded responsibilities, it is important that schools not *wait* for the system to be

"firing on all cylinders," but continue to seek out ways to improve classroom instructional practice as changes in roles and responsibilities take place -- better to have some redundancy in the process for a while, than to create a vacuum where no one is assuming responsibility.

(Out-take)

Computers Need Printers

Elmore (1997, 2000) uses the term "reciprocal accountability," which basically says that you can't hold someone accountable for doing something if you don't make it possible to do it. Consider the fact that many people complain that computers are in classrooms, but "no one uses them." This is an exaggeration, but if you investigate why indeed some classroom computers are underutilized, here is what you will find out: The teacher may not know how to use a computer, or may not know how to use one effectively to enhance instruction. [professional development.]   The computers in the classroom may be old, and new software doesn't work on them. [funds for upgrades] The computers don't work. [technical assistance.] There are no cartridges for the printer, or no paper. [budget better.] Worse yet, there are no printers. [What's the sense of writing a story or a letter, making a computer graph, using a table on a spreadsheet, or planning a newspaper if you can't get a printed copy?]

THE CORE: TEACHERS, STUDENTS AND CURRICULUM MATERIALS

We've discussed taking stock of the school program, planning for change, and principal and district roles. The program must focus on standards and instruction; the principal, as instructional leader, must know what goes on in every classroom – where teachers are strong and where they need improvement; and the Abbott district offices must be given, and accept responsibility for supporting schools in their standards based instructional improvement efforts. Throughout all of this, the core of the daily work – the synergy between teachers, students and curriculum materials – has been implied but not closely examined. In this section we delve more deeply into the interactive relationship between teacher, student and materials as a way of thinking about the reform process at the classroom level. [6]
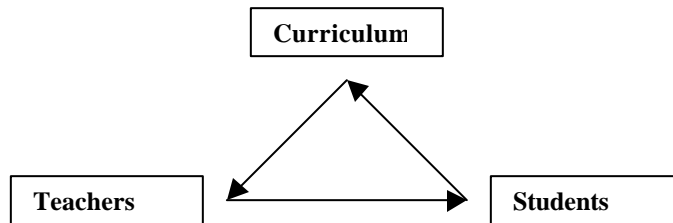
It's a simple triangle but a useful mental image for organizing thoughts and

questions about the core work of schools. How does each element of this triangle affect the others? As we walk through each of the three major elements of this working relationship -- teachers, students and curriculum materials --try to imagine how changes to one may affect the others.

Teachers

Before addressing the teacher's role in a standards based instructional improvement program, it is first necessary to consider the responsibilities that are not directly related to teaching and learning, but are nonetheless taken on or thrust upon many teachers in low-income, urban school districts. We all know that many kids come to school suffering the social, psychological, and health effects of poverty. Often, teachers expend the bulk of their time and energy trying to address these deficits themselves in order to get students ready to learn.   All too often, teachers are the only consistent source of these supports.

However, the fact that students aren't getting the help they *should* be getting elsewhere doesn't mean that being a "jack of all trades" should be accepted, even informally, as the standard teacher job description, no matter how talented or caring individual teachers may be. What may once have been an occasional, emergency role for the teacher has now become commonplace and has blurred society's perception of who is appropriately accountable for children's social, emotional and physical well-being. As much as children and youth may be in need of social services, mentoring, parenting etc., the teacher's professional role as instructor must be maintained as primary. This is not to say that other needs should be allowed to go unmet. There's no denying that without supports, many students would arrive at school in no condition to learn; rather, those needs should be met deliberately, and by the appropriate professionals trained for that role. Allowing children's non-educational needs to *default* to teachers does a disservice to both student and teacher.   "No kidding," you may say. It's not as if teachers went looking for this expanded role. The point here is that in NJ Abbott districts, resources and political attention are newly available to enable teachers to shift that burden back

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[6] Cohen (1999) proposed that the educational process can be thought about, in its simplest form, as the interaction of students and teachers with curriculum materials.

where it belongs – to make referrals to the appropriate agency or individual. According to Abbott litigation, and with the Abbott funds available, quality needs assessment, case management, and individualized student plans, not to mention supplemental programs explicitly responsive to student needs and family support teams in every Abbott elementary school should address learning readiness for most students, and make it possible for teachers to focus more intently upon instruction.

Of course, this sort of change doesn't happen instantly. Institutional and individual habits die hard. However, this has to be the goal and not a long-range goal either. This is yet another area where reciprocal accountability comes into play; teachers cannot reasonably be held accountable to "make learning happen" if their students' learning readiness needs are unmet or if meeting those needs falls squarely on already overextended teachers. Just as the big picture focus of the school and its administration must be standards based instructional improvement, the classroom focus must be standards based instruction and learning with all the attendant supervisory and collegial support necessary to make that happen.

At some point, we have to stop thinking about conditions as they are this minute, and think, instead, as if these changes in role and attitude have at least begun to happen. Otherwise, wheels just spin and dig in. So, the remainder of this section works from the assumption that teachers will in fact have teaching as their primary if not exclusive focus, and that principals, districts and the state will fulfill their responsibilities to relieve teachers of non-instructional roles and effectively connect students with other sources of help.   The following questions are designed as a partial inventory of teachers' role in the instructional process. In thinking about where teachers fit in the "core triangle," and the types of supports and professional atmosphere that will facilitate instructional improvement, this tool may be useful.   There are many contexts within which this tool might be used – as part of the needs assessment process, within departments, as a model for building a different or expanded school inventory, as part of a professional development activity. The important thing to remember, however the inventory is used, is with every question, answer what is explicitly asked, then answer the implied question which is: "How does our answer to x, y or z affect our focus on standards based instruction?"

Teacher Inventory

Roles and Daily Routines:

1. How would you characterize teacher satisfaction at your school (low, average, high)?

2. How would you describe teacher interaction– what's the climate in hallways, faculty lounge, department offices, or after school hours?

3. What is the school's teacher retention/attrition rate? When teachers leave the school, where do they go and why?

4. How does the school's teacher absence rate compare to other schools?

5. Who monitors the lunchroom, playground, bus pickups at your school? If teachers participate in these tasks, how many hours per week does the average teacher spend on these tasks?

6. How would you characterize teachers' and administration's relationships with the teachers' union? What is the district's history with the union? How does the answer to both of these questions affect the teaching environment?

7. What percentage (estimate) of the average teacher's day is spent on administrative paperwork? Weekly?

8. On average, how many extracurricular events are teachers asked/expected to attend on a monthly basis? Do teachers participate willingly?

9. How do teachers learn about new state, district and school level requirements?

Teaching and Learning:

1. How are teachers selected for the school, by whom and on the basis of what criteria?

2. Are all teachers teaching the subject and grade they prepared/certified to teach?

3. How are teachers oriented to the school, their colleagues, and their classrooms? How do they learn what's expected of them?

4. How, if at all, has teaching changed since the implementation of standards and standards based assessments?

5. How do individual teachers know/decide what to teach?

6. Describe a typical classroom or several classrooms. (layout, number of students, physical condition, appearance)

7. How are literacy and numeracy addressed at your school? (programmatically, individual classroom, cross-grade)

8. Do teachers look at student work together and if so, how do they decide/know what constitutes good work?

9. How are classroom/student assignments made? For example, in lower grades; looping, team teaching, combined grades or in upper grades; houses, clusters, institutes or content specialty groupings.

10. How do students learn what is expected of them (what constitutes good work)?

11. Do parents know (specifically) what is expected of students? If so, how do they know?

12. If a teacher perceives a non-instructional problem with a student or students what happens next? Choose a problem, (student withdrawn, aggressive, repeatedly absent etc.) and walk through what might happen.

13. Do teachers know what is being taught, and how, in other classrooms and grades?

14. How do teachers know what their students need to know and be able to do in order to succeed in the next grade?

15. Who receives students' scores on standardized tests, and in what form?

16. How are test results used by teachers, if at all?

17. Do all teachers believe that all students can learn and achieve the standards?

18. What do teachers expect their students to do in the future?

19. What do teachers cite as their biggest (or couple of biggest) challenge(s)?

20. How does your whole school reform model affect what is taught? How it is taught?

Professionalism and Professional Development:

1. Do teachers have formal opportunities to discuss instruction? Student work? Their instructional/professional needs? Who participates in these discussions?

2. Do teachers visit each other's classes, or visit other schools to see colleagues teach? If so, how do teachers get coverage and free time to do so?

3. Do teachers share what they learn through observation of other teachers with colleagues?

4. Are teachers observed in their teaching? How often and by whom? Do they receive feedback? If so, describe the usual topical content and manner of feedback. Any follow-up on observations?

5. Are formal observations part of teachers' performance evaluation? What criteria are used? How do those criteria relate to standards based instruction?

6. Are teachers encouraged to assume decision making, leadership roles within the school? Examples?

7. Do teachers and administrators have the same goals around instruction and practice?

8. With whom would a teacher in the school most likely discuss issues around instruction? Imagine a scenario where a teacher feels her instruction of 4th grade writing isn't what it needs to be. Is that teacher likely to seek help? From whom? What might this process look like and how might it conclude?

9. When do formal professional development activities typically occur? (during the school day, after school, summer, weekends etc.) How are classrooms covered if during the school day? Are teachers compensated for extracurricular PD activities?

10. Do teachers participate in research and selection of PD activities and programs? If so, how?

11. Do teachers initiate PD activities or programming? Examples?

12. How are decisions made about what PD will take place, how it will be organized, who will lead the activities, etc?

13. Are teachers monitoring and reporting their own PD hours? Are there systems in place for studying the PD activities of teachers, as a way to make better decisions about the PD that the district or school should be providing to teachers?

14. Are teachers required to achieve advanced degrees, or take graduate level coursework? Are there any specific requirement regarding the content of that coursework? What support, if any, do teachers receive toward fulfilling these requirements?

15. Does your school have a teacher mentor program for new or inexperienced teachers?

16. Does your school offer/organize support to experienced teachers?

Resources:

1. Under what circumstances is a classroom staffed with paraprofessional/aid assistance? What are the typical responsibilities of such aides?

2. Do teachers meet with parents? If so, when? Are parents given choices as to when to meet?

3. Is childcare or transportation a challenge to meetings between teachers and parents?

4. Do parents know how to help students with school work? Do they know what good work looks like?

5. Describe the process by which a teacher buys or requisitions supplies for the classroom/lessons.

6. Do teachers have ample access to low-tech equipment such as xerox machines, telephones, overhead projectors?

7. Do teachers have access to email and the Internet? If so, how many teachers use computers to communicate with other teachers or for research purposes?

8. Do they use technology to communicate with administration, central office, parents, or students?

9. How would you describe teacher's knowledge of current technology, and the school and district's emphasis on learning new educational technologies?

Students

The bottom line question in standards based education is "How are the students doing? Are they learning and are they meeting the standards?" In Philadelphia, three years into Annenberg's Children Achieving initiative, the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) conducted a survey of some 2500 teachers in the

Philadelphia schools. The following excerpt describes one vexing finding from the survey:

> On the survey... over half of the teachers surveyed (50.8%) said that their own teaching effectiveness was "good" or "excellent" and that student academic performance was "poor" or "weak." Additionally, among the 25.3% of teachers who said that the quality of student academic performance had somewhat or greatly worsened, 42% said that their own teaching effectiveness had somewhat or greatly improved. How could it be that teachers are doing better if students are getting worse? (Consortium for Policy Research in Education & Research for Action, May 1999, p 98)

The important take-away here is that these teachers seemed comfortable with the internal conflict in their responses. Presumably, they either believed it was possible for their teaching to be better while student learning got worse, or they believed that the rate at which student's performance was worsening outpaced the rate at which their teaching improved. Whatever the explanation for these crossed wires, the point is that whatever progress educators make in their own professional development, and however well matched that professional development may be to educator's professional needs, this does not guarantee improved student performance. Students are a connected, but separate piece of the core triangle; if their performance doesn't show consistent improvement, then the other core components (teachers and curriculum), along with administration must search for the cause and adapt accordingly. Perhaps learning readiness is a problem. Perhaps the curriculum is lacking in some way, or instruction isn't conveying the curriculum in a way that's working for all kids. Perhaps classroom management, class size, or inadequate space and materials is a problem. Whatever the cause, it's not working unless the students are learning and meeting the standards.

This raises the question of whether classroom assessments – teacher directed testing as opposed to standardized tests – are designed to capture the "right" information. In other words, are daily, weekly or monthly assessments aligned with state assessments and the standards? Are the tests that students take in their typical work week well designed to inform the teacher as to what those students actually know and can do? Just as the State must design assessments, and disseminate data that is useful for instructional improvement, teachers may be missing an opportunity to gain insight into students' learning process and their own teaching practice if classroom assessments are not

carefully drawn for that purpose. Again, designing effective assessments that are well-aligned with the standards is not an innate skill. Teachers need support and training to ensure that they make the most of every assessment opportunity.

The following questions are designed to take partial inventory of the students' role in the instructional process – What is the status of students, their environment and supports and is this status compatible with learning and meeting educational standards? This inventory, like the teacher inventory can be used in a variety of ways. Students might be asked to answer many of the questions. It would be interesting to compare student responses with educators' predictions of their responses.

Student Inventory

Students in School:

1. Describe the students who attend your school.

2. What is your student mobility rate? Are students tracked within or across districts when they move? How long does it typically take for records to be transferred to and from schools?

3. Describe the atmosphere in school hallways (at passing time and other).

4. Describe students' relationship to the school, if any, during non-school hours.

5. How might students describe their school? (physical plant, teachers, curriculum, peers)

6. How might students describe their parents' role in their school and schooling?

7. Do students perceive the school to be a safe place?

8. Describe students' engagement with their school work. What helps them to engage?

9. To whom are students expected to bring their concerns, problems, questions within the school? To whom DO they bring their concerns, problems and questions, if anyone?

10. Do students know what the Standards are, and if so, how do they know about them?

11. In upper grades, how do students learn what classes they must take to graduate?

12. Do parents know about the Standards. How and what do they know?

13. How do parents learn about graduation requirements? Do most parents know what the graduation requirements are?

14. Do students know that science and math classes are progressive? (must take algebra by grade x in order to have calculus by grade y etc.)

15. Do parents know that science and math classes are progressive?

16. Do students and parents understand how students are assessed?

17. What are students' biggest challenges to learning?

18. What happens when an individual student is struggling or failing?

19. What would/do students say would help them to learn and achieve the standards?

20. If students have Individual Learning/Education Plans (Special Ed. or other), who participates in the plan?

21. What if any tutorial resources are available to students who are struggling in the classroom? Where and when can students receive this help?

22. What do students expect to be doing in the future?

23. Do students know what they must do or achieve in order to meet their future goals?

24. Do parents know what students must do or achieve in order to meet their future goals?

Students Out of School:

1. What do students do after school? (Describe the range of activities and what is most common).

2. Describe students' home life. How well do adults in the school know what students' home life is like? How do they know?

3. How does students' out of school time affect their school performance (overall and individual anonymous examples if available).

4. What would/do students say is their biggest out of school challenge to their in-school performance?

5. Do social services and other services students receive, communicate with the school? Who at the school receives information from social services?

6. What role does students' community play in their lives? (church, community orgs., peers, gangs, local business, mentoring, sports)

7. What relationship, if any exists between the community (generally or specific parts of community) and the school?

8. Is there any one person (or group of persons) in each student's life who is familiar with all of the services (educational and otherwise) that student receives?

Depending upon how this inventory is used and your goals in using it, you may gather useful data from educators and students about those pieces that are working and those that may be missing the mark both in and outside of school. Since the inventory is designed to illicit information about students' experience out of school, and since we know how heavily student performance is influenced by students' lives at home and in

the community, the following section briefly addresses parents and community concerns. For more discussion and recommendations on this topic, see the Abbott Implementation Resource Guide on Parents and Community.

Parents and Community

When students don't "get it," someone (usually the teacher), has to figure out what to do next. According to the tenets of standards-based instruction, the teacher cannot simply move ahead to the next chapter in the text. Moving the class ahead without leaving some students behind can be an overwhelmingly difficult task. This is where additional classroom support becomes so critically important - tutoring, advice from colleagues, help from parents, in-class assistance from paraprofessionals or co-teachers, recommendations from curriculum supervisors or learning specialists.

Not surprisingly, finding ways to support students who are having academic difficulties at school sometimes leads to addressing things that are going on outside the school setting. Counselors, social workers, psychologists and others who serve on family support teams are critical to putting together the missing pieces of the puzzle - what is the home like, the community, the peer culture? This is why, in Abbott and other urban reform projects, there is great emphasis placed on how to involve parents and community, and how to provide for unmet needs of students that interfere with learning. Understanding the special situations experienced by bilingual populations is another enormous challenge for today's educators. Not only do we have to figure out how to help students learn a new language, we must also help them to succeed at school by appreciating the challenges they are facing at home and in the community, and understanding what their cultural perspective is about what should be happening at school. (See Abbott Implementation Resource Guides on Bilingual Education and Special Education.) Similarly, there is greater effort to assure that young children come to school ready to learn.

In spite of all these necessary attempts to address obvious disadvantages, it is important that support staff keep a positive approach, that they look for strengths to build on, as well as finding ways to compensate for deficiencies that may exist.

Researchers and practitioners dedicated to eliminating educational inequity agree that working from a deficit model doesn't help kids or communities in the long run. How can we capitalize on the strengths of children and their families, build on what they can do and do well? One thing that seems pretty apparent is that educators have not sufficiently involved parents and community members in this discussion. This is why Title I requirements and whole school reform models have parent outreach components. It is why "distributed leadership" models (Cohen (1999), Spillane (1998), stress that we have to bring expertise to the table. The potential contribution of parents and community members is undervalued, and the logistical challenges of parental involvement are underestimated. Flexibility of meeting times and school events to accommodate single or working parents, transportation, translation, and child care are just a few ways in which schools, the district and state could facilitate parental involvement.

(Out-take)

First Impressions: Press 7 if you feel unimportant
What happens when people call your school? Do they get through, or do they get busy signals, voicemail, complicated routings like "Press 2 for more confusion..." Are phone calls returned? What about email messages? How deadly is it if parents and people outside school can't communicate effectively? How much of this is due to the fact that teachers do not have easy access to telephones or use their email? (Email will help, if it becomes part of the culture, and some schools are experimenting with giving teachers cell phones!)

Curriculum

Finally, consider the role of curriculum in the instructional process. It is imperative that the curriculum be content-rich, aligned to standards and engaging for students. It is equally imperative that resources are in place to thoroughly implement the curriculum – books, materials, equipment, support staff. The bottom-line though: It doesn't matter how good the curriculum is or how available the curriculum materials, if teachers aren't taught to teach with the materials and supported in their work, or if students are unwilling or unable to engage with them. The selected materials must be appropriate for the students, and teachers must be given the opportunity to learn how best to use those materials and instructional strategies. Once again we see that each component of the instructional process functions in combination with the others – teachers, students and curriculum.

There is a significant caveat involved in selecting quality "standards-based" curriculum materials. As soon as standards were introduced, almost every publisher set about making their products marketable by assuring consumers that their curriculum "meets standards" or "addresses standards." It is important to keep in mind that standards were not meant to be used as a list of lecture topics, but rather as a set of topics for students to learn. The subtle difference is that the new instructional emphasis is supposed to be on how students are learning, not on whether or not the teachers are "covering" the topics. As you consider new texts or other curriculum materials, try to think about student learning. Will the materials be engaging for students? Are there suggestions for teachers about how they can help the students learn? Are there suggestions for different ways to teach the same topic? Assessment ideas for monitoring student progress? Suggestions for what to do when students are not succeeding? problem-solving activities that require higher levels of thinking, and require students to read, write, think, draw, strategize, and use higher order thinking skills? Basically, does the text or do the curriculum materials focus beyond what the teacher is going to teach, on how to help the students learn and understand? This is a very subtle but very important difference.

(Out-take)

"I'll take a number 4, hold the mayo"
Many schools are insisting that teachers attend to standards by requiring that they list standards in their lesson plans. Good idea? At least one teacher I know admits making up numbers to put in the margins of her lesson plans, and never really looks at the standards at all. She knows that all the math standards start with a "4" and there are about 15 standards, so she makes up numbers like "4.3, 4.7, 4.11." No one notices, or cares. So why should she go to all that trouble?

The curriculum inventory asks questions related to the standards, how the curriculum is taught and with what materials, and how student learning is measured.

CURRICULUM INVENTORY

1. When was the curriculum written, and by whom?

2. Is the curriculum aligned to the standards? Give examples.

3. How specific is the curriculum as written?

4. How often is the curriculum reviewed and/or revised?

5. How do teachers know *how* to teach the curriculum?

6. Do teachers of the same grade level and subject area teach the curriculum in the same way? If not, how do they differ?

7. How closely do teachers adhere to the curriculum?

8. How, if at all, does the curriculum as written *and* as taught reflect students' multiple learning modalities?

9. Is your school focusing more on some areas of the curriculum more than others?

10. How do textbooks and other materials or equipment in classrooms support/align with the curriculum?

11. Were textbooks and other materials or equipment selected *for* this curriculum or adapted to it?

12. Who selects textbooks and other classroom materials?

13. How do you know when students have learned a particular skill or lesson topic?

14. How are classroom assessments (routine material tests) developed and by whom?

15. What is the relationship, if any, between classroom assessments and state standardized tests?

16. What is the role of standardized tests in your school?

17. Do report cards reflect the Standards?

18. When were report cards last revised?

19. How is the school day organized? (block scheduling, mastery/project driven scheduling, literacy or numeracy blocks etc.)

20. Describe any major changes to scheduling or class assignments that have occurred over the past 3-5 years.

If the biggest issue in achieving standards is engaging students in the learning process, certainly the biggest question is, "What do you do when the kids don't get it?" If there were one simple answer, teachers would have easy jobs. No one can prescribe the "correct" course of action in every case because what's going wrong, and what will fix it, isn't static. So, the strategy for addressing "what to do when kids don't get it" is less about the singular fix than it is about the inquiry process. At a minimum, identifying the problem involves asking:

- Is the curriculum aligned with the standards we're assessing?

- Do the assessments we're using accurately measure what students know and can do? Is test data reported in a way that allows us to map performance with instruction?

- Is the instruction students receive actually providing the learning opportunities they need to succeed? Are multiple learning modalities accommodated by the curriculum and instruction?

- Is professional development offering the instructional strategies and support needed by teachers?

- Are students ready to seize learning opportunities? Are their needs being met by the appropriate service providers? Are parents as engaged as possible?

When it comes to intervention, again, there is no *one* correct strategy. Where problems stem from the curriculum or instruction, obviously quick action must be taken to improve upon what and how students are taught. If content and instruction are high quality and students continue to struggle, we can generalize to say that acceleration rather than traditional remediation or retention appears to be the preferable approach. In other words, it is usually better to do more of a good thing (high quality instruction), than to slow the learning process and further distance students from their age peers.[7] Sometimes students who fail do so because they have moved frequently, have had little high quality teaching, or are mired in knowledge and skills deficits accumulated over the years. Frequently, regardless of the cause for failure, retention is the reflexive response, without an accompanying accelerated instruction program aimed at helping students "catch up.". Or, students are promoted then enrolled in remediation programs, which in many cases simply leave students even further behind at the end of the year. For an example of district immersion and accelerated programs, see the San Diego City schools website, particularly the section under heading "Blueprint for Success" (http://www.sandi.net/indices/blueprint.htm). (Whatever the approach, intervention should be immediate. This is a tall order in bureaucratic systems, but as you well know, missed learning opportunities are cumulative, and they get harder and harder for kids to

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[7] According to research commissioned by The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University, "Grade retention disproportionately affects African-American males who are the most likely ethnicity/gender group to be held back. By ages 15 to 17, close to 50 percent of African-American males compared to about 30 percent of white females are below the average grade for this age or have dropped out of school.

overcome as they reach higher grades (or are retained and "age-out" of their actual performance level).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

With his term "reciprocal accountability," Elmore (2000) asks, "how can we hold teachers accountable for something that they do not have the vision, skills, or resources to execute?" They must first be provided with the tools to accomplish the desired outcome. He explains the logic of the argument like this:

> Students' academic performance, by any number of measures, has proven to be relatively static in the face of more than a decade of educational reform. In most of the reforms, states and localities have focused on changing the guidance schools receive on what students should be taught (content standards); changing the structures and processes by which schools are held accountable (student performance standards, assessments, rewards, and penalties); and changing the governance structures by which accountability is defined (site-based management). In order to progress from reforms of this sort to changes in student performance, one has to assume that changes in policy and organization will result in a different kind of teaching, which will in turn result in a different kind of learning for students, who will in turn demonstrate this learning by doing better on measures of performance. One key element missing in this formulation, however, is the *knowledge* required for teachers and administrators to engage in a different kind of teaching and learning. Policies, by themselves don't impart new knowledge; they create the occasion for educators to seek new knowledge and turn that knowledge into new practice. Hence, professional development is the main link connecting policy to practice. Elmore and Burney (1997, p 2)

Loucks-Horsley et al (1998) concur with the idea that there are stages in the professional development process. Elmore categorized these stages as awareness, planning, implementation and reflection. Loucks-Horsley suggests a similar process. A much simplified overview of the process is that, at stage one, teachers are presented with a new idea, like standards, and they ask themselves, "What is this all about, and how does it affect me?" Then, at stage two, they begin to move forward with the new idea: "Ok, so what do I have to do? Show me and let me practice doing it." It isn't until they are somewhat familiar with the new materials and how to teach them that they are free to reflect on what they are doing. At stage three, they ask the ultimate question, "How is all this affecting my students?" This is a simplified progression in the sense that teachers will, of course, be assessing student work along the way, and will be trying to figure out

what students know and understand even as they are getting familiar with new instructional materials and strategies. Undoubtedly, though, it is hard to focus on big questions about student impact while you yourself are still learning how to use new materials and textbooks, and deeply engaged in improving your own skills. Unfortunately, the last step is often shortchanged or may never occur at all. Instead of engaging in serious and deep reflection on the entire curriculum, the way it was taught, and the ultimate effect on what students know and are able to do as a result, everyone is anxious to move on to the next "new thing."

When you consider the message here, it is one that also applies to the serious reflection and evaluation that is needed about your school's overall program. It is important to seize the opportunity to reflect on what has happened so far, and to try and learn from what has occurred. By identifying aspects of the program that have helped students learn, you are taking steps towards improvement, *before* latching on to the next "new thing."

The fact that learning is never static, and that change is not only inevitable but desirable, has resulted in new images for quality professional development where systems are set in motion for accommodating continuous learning. Collaborative responsibility for success has led to different forms for professional development, and the establishment of standards for quality professional development.[8]

Providing sufficient, quality professional development activities for teachers has proved to be an enormous challenge. Providers are supposed to figure out ways to help teachers improve their content knowledge, learn new ways to teach and assess students, plan for implementing changes, view their instructional practice in new ways, open their practice to colleagues for review and improvement, and engage in collaborative work with parents and community partners.

Clearly, in the new, broader view of professional development, the traditional "teacher workshop" is not adequate to achieve the desired goals. Such stand-alone workshops, occurring in isolation and removed from the realities of day-to-day practice, seldom lead to substantive change or improvement. Similarly, such short-term

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[8] See, for example, New Jersey's "Standards for Required Professional Development for Teachers: A New Vision." These standards were designed to provide guidance for the successful completion on new state requirements for professional development, which went into effect in September 2000.

professional development "events" were ineffective unless they were supported back at school, on site, with materials for classroom use, and additional support and follow-through.

Outside funding has allowed districts to explore new visions and alternative approaches to professional development. One such approach is exemplified in a science outreach program sponsored by the Merck Institute for Science Education (MISE), initially funded by Merck, and receiving additional funding from the National Science Foundation. MISE targeted two NJ districts (Rahway, Linden,) and two PA districts (North Penn and Readington) for their initial work. MISE crafted a program that offered guidance and financial support to districts and schools, attention to aligning district curriculum frameworks with state standards, access to quality instructional materials, extensive professional development for teachers and teacher leaders, leadership activities for district leaders, supervisors and principals, and ongoing assistance for schools and classrooms during the implementation stages. Merck committed ten years of funding to the program which has persistently steered teachers towards deepening their content knowledge and improving their instructional practice, sharing ideas with other teachers in their own school or at their own grade level, and being reflective about the impact that the initiative is having on student performance. The program was especially worthy because MISE began the process of change, but they managed to involve the districts so that it was a collaborative partnership in many ways, yet each school district shaped the program to meet local standards and priorities. The program was a 2000-2001 winner of the Ron Brown Award for Corporate Leadership as an outstanding example of a business-school partnership, and MISE is in the process of extending its outreach to other New Jersey Schools. (For more information about the work of MISE, go to www.mise.org).

Based on this one story of a successful professional development outreach program, it is not surprising to consider the findings of Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon (2001) in their evaluation of the Eisenhower Professional Development Program (IKE, Title II), a federal program which supports a large number of professional development initiatives for teachers, mainly in mathematics and science. Surveys were collected from a representative sample of 1027 teachers from 358 school districts, to

obtain information about several key features of the professional development activities they attended. The purpose was to determine which of these features had the greatest effect on teachers' self reported increases in knowledge and skills and changes in classroom practice and skills. The features being studied included:

(a) focus on *content knowledge* (focus on improving and deepening teachers' content knowledge in mathematics and science)

(b) opportunities for *active learning* (opportunities for teachers to become actively engaged in the analysis of teaching and learning (for example, by reviewing student work or visiting each other's classrooms to obtain feedback about their teaching)

(c) *coherence* with other learning activities (incorporating experiences that are consistent with teachers' goals, are aligned with state standards and assessments, and make sense in the context of other things going on in their schools and districts)

(d) the *form* of the activity ("traditional" activities such as workshops, institutes, courses, and conferences, versus "reform" types of professional development such as study groups, mentoring and coaching).

(e) the *collective participation* of teachers from the same school, grade, or subject (so that teachers can share ideas, support each other, plan, discuss progress, etc.); and

(f) the *duration* of the activity (total number of contact hours, as well as the span of time over which the activity took place)

(g) the *collective participation* of teachers from the same school, grade, or subject (so that teachers can share ideas, support each other, plan, discuss progress, etc.); and

(h) the *duration* of the activity (total number of contact hours, as well as the span of time over which the activity took place)

Results of the survey indicated that sustained and intensive professional development is more likely to have an impact than shorter professional development. It also seems more likely that enhanced knowledge and skills will result when the professional development focuses on content, gives teachers opportunities for "hands on" work (active learning) and is integrated into the daily life of the school (coherence).

One way to assure that professional development has these components (content focus, active learning and coherence) is to think about how to deliver on-the-job training in such a way that professional development activities are woven into the school day in natural ways.   Having on-site coaches to work with the teachers or do model lessons in classrooms might be well-suited to delivering these kinds of opportunities to learn. In this way, the students are benefiting at the same time as teachers. Investing in this level of support is a major step for schools, though, and committing funds to this approach is especially intimidating because criticism abounds if the coaches are not well-selected and well-used.   This may be why the study by Garet et al reported that the type of activity ("traditional" or "reform") seems less important than other features: duration, collective participation, and a focus on content, active learning, and coherence. In other words, the quality of the professional development is more important than the method of delivery, even though it would seem easier to deliver quality professional development when there are qualified, energetic, committed, and respected coaches available on a day to day basis to guide the efforts being made at the school level. The results of the study are important because they confirm many of the current hypotheses about what kinds of professional development will have the greatest impact on improving teaching practice and, ultimately, student achievement. A major challenge is the cost and effort involved in planning for and providing this kind of quality professional development.

The first step in planning for professional development is to evaluate, or take inventory, of the professional development opportunities currently available to educators at your school. Previous inventories in this manual, most notably the principal and teacher inventories, include questions about professional development, but it may be helpful to have a separate tool devoted exclusively to this topic. The professional development inventory asks questions related to identification and content of, participation in and access to professional development activities.[9]

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[9] Part of this inventory is adapted from the Horizon Research Inc. web site. While this site deals primarily with researcher conducted classroom evaluation, as opposed to school-based self evaluation, it may still be a useful resource in the evaluation process and to identify further information on the subject. See http://www.horizon-research.com/publications/evaluating_pd.pdf.

Professional Development Inventory

1. Describe those professional development activities in which all teachers (regardless of subject area) participate.

2. How were these school-wide professional development activities selected? Funded?

3. When is professional development offered/provided? (If during the school day, how is coverage provided, and if after hours, how if at all are teachers compensated)?

4. Describe all content area specific professional development activities in which teachers participate.

5. How were these PD activities selected? Funded?

6. Describe those professional development activities devoted to instruction.

7. Describe those professional development activities that might be characterized as directed toward teaching a "standards based" curriculum or program.

8. How well does the design of the professional development programming align with standards of best practice in the content areas to which it is directed?

9. How well does the design of professional development programming align with the learning needs of the faculty as a whole ? With the learning needs of individuals?

10. What do teachers think of the professional development activities in which they participate? Do they consider the activities relevant to their practice and needs?

11. How is the effectiveness of professional development programming measured?

12. How, if at all, is this measurement used to plan for future professional development activities?

13. Describe the role of mentoring in the school.

14. How often, if at all, does the principal observe other schools?

15. How often, if at all, does the principal observe classroom instruction? How is this observation processed with the teacher, if at all.

16. How often, if at all, do teachers observe other classrooms?

17. What opportunities exist for teachers to discuss student work with one another? How is time made available for this activity?

18. How do teachers determine what constitutes "good student work?" Do teachers agree upon those criteria?

New York City Community District 2 is another source from which schools can draw well-designed, coherent and instruction-focused professional development ideas. Key aspects of the professional development strategies used in District 2 include:

- ***Creating a "Professional Development Laboratory"*** staffed by model teachers who agree to mentor other teachers by having them visit for three weeks, and then give them classroom assistance when they return to their own schools. The lab is used to encourage teachers of all skill levels and experience to learn about and adopt quality instructional practices in their own classrooms, as a way to introduce new practices and further their school's staff development priorities.

- ***Using external consultants and district staff developers*** to work directly with teachers individually and in groups at the school site. Each consultant typically works one-on-one with eight to ten teachers for blocks of three to four months each, and in addition works with grade level teams and larger groups of teachers during planning time, at the lunch hour and after school. The district clearly believes that change in instructional practice involves hard work: addressing problems of practice with peers and experts, observing each other's practice, and adopting new practices gradually over time in one's own classroom setting. This strategy of gradually reaching more teachers and more schools necessitates staying focused on a given content area so that the effort can expand and be sustained over time, resulting in a large cumulative impact.

- ***Encouraging intervisitation and peer networks for both teachers and principals***. This includes visits to other sites, inside and outside the district, as a way to bring teachers and principals into contact with exemplary practices.

- ***Providing off-site training, both in the summer and during the school year***. Much of the planning for this off-site training is done at the school level, as a way of integrating school-level priorities into the district-wide plan for summer institutes. To assure that the work continues during the school year, the district provides resources and direct assistance as a follow-up during the school year. The overall idea is to provide continuous support in a limited number of subject areas to more and more teachers, and to provide needed supports to assure implementation.

Time

An important consideration when planning for professional development is time. In theory, Abbott provides funds at unprecedented levels. So for once, the cost of professional development (logistical hassles around requesting the funds aside for the moment), should not be the deal breaker. However, it is more difficult to solve the time problem. Even though funds can provide coverage of classrooms or pay teachers for their out of school time, the former solution still takes teachers away from instruction, and the latter takes them away from their personal lives. If teachers are required to go to professional development activities before school, during prep periods, after school, Saturdays and/or summers, they may resent the time spent, particularly if they question whether the time is spent well. All the more reason, therefore, to involve teachers in the professional development planning process, and to ensure that professional development is aligned with the instructional improvement plan (and of course with teachers' needs). In a caring and professional work environment, where adult learning is valued and supported, it should follow that educators will take increasing interest in their own professional development.

(Out-take)

Grown ups can buy their own pizza
Does it seem odd to you that when something positive happens at school, more often than not students AND adults are rewarded with a pizza party? We all like pizza, (and donuts), but given that teachers often have to schlep to the 5 and 10 to buy their own classroom supplies, it seems possible that something OTHER than pizza might be a welcomed by teachers when administration wants to reward a job well done.

There is a tendency to think that if you provide adequate opportunities for teachers to socialize, professional community will take hold. This is not true. Although it is important for teachers to meet and network, casual and informal meetings and conversations are not sufficient for building capacity and professional connections. Teachers will be more engaged and connected to their work, and have a stronger sense of participation and professional community if principal leadership, professional development, and participation in decision making are deliberately connected to problems of practice. In the spirit of helping teachers to try new things in their practice, it

is also necessary to establish an environment where they feel secure in their efforts. Are the leaders at the school encouraging teachers to look critically at their own practice, to try new things, *and* are they acknowledging that instructional improvement won't happen overnight? (We tell students that they learn from their mistakes, and that learning takes time and practice, but rarely offer our teachers the same understanding and support.)

LOOKING FORWARD

As mentioned earlier, stakeholder participation in review and development of the 2003-04 emergency Abbott regulations made a difference in the quality, clarity and direction provided by these rules. Continued stakeholder participation promises to further improve the permanent regulations scheduled to be adopted by the State board sometime in the spring of 2004.

While improved State direction is critical, far more important is reform and improvement work at the local level. Such work produced impressive gains in 4th grade literacy across the Abbott districts from 1999-2002. A continued focus on early literacy improvement coupled with serious initiatives scheduled to be unveiled in the Spring of 2004 by the Secondary Work Group, also ordered by the Supreme Court in *Abbott X*, promises to further increase local capacity to meet the Abbott mandate to improve teaching and learning, preK to 12, and to reduce further the achievement gap with suburban schools.

Change is rarely easy, but in this case, policy and regulation changes promise to bring good results in what we hope will be the not too distant future.

APPENDIX A: PHILADELPHIA'S CHILDREN ACHIEVING CHALLENGE

In 1995, Philadelphia launched a major effort to reform its schools. The "Children Achieving Challenge" was created through a grant from the Annenberg Foundation and matching support from other public and private funders. In all, over $150 million was invested in this five-year project encompassing a wide range of comprehensive school reforms. During the first year, new, tougher standards were developed for academic subjects and student skills, and extensive professional development took place to strengthen leadership and improve classroom practice. The district was restructured into smaller "clusters" to facilitate change and decentralize decision-making and support structures. The program had as its goals many of the same goals that have been set for Abbott districts: to improve student learning by focusing on ways to help all students meet or exceed standards, to have more localized decision making, and provide support structures for students by involving parents and community and providing health and human services to students and their families. As in Abbott districts, outside support was leveraged through universities, business partnerships, and federal programs such as the National Science Foundation's systemic reform initiatives. (Philadelphia's Urban Systemic Initiative, the USI, and New Jersey's Statewide Systemic Initiative, the NJ SSI, were two of these NSF initiatives, both funded to improve the quality of mathematics and science education in schools.) In Philadelphia, as in New Jersey, as a way to assure that the reform would progress, each school was encouraged to adopt a whole school reform model, and accountability structures were put in place, including new tests to assess student progress towards the standards.

When we visited schools in the early days of Children Achieving, it was not uncommon to hear teachers say, "This too shall pass." They were reluctant to get overly involved in the reform effort because experience told them that the reform would not last. Indeed, six years later, they earned the right to say, "I told you so." In spite of Philadelphia's modest progress towards addressing complex issues, the superintendent is gone, new governance structures have been put in place, the district is undergoing at least partial takeover by the state.

This story gives credence to what F. Hess (1999) calls "policy churn": "…relatively unstable political faction advance new 'reforms' as ways of satisfying their electoral constituencies, pausing only long enough to take credit for having acted, and then quickly moving on to new reforms, with no attention to the institutionalization or implementation of the previous reforms." We can only hope that some of the good things that happened as a result of Children Achieving will take root. (Passantino, 2002)

APPENDIX B: EVALUATING THE "FIT" OF YOUR WHOLE SCHOOL REFORM MODEL

This tool is intended as a guide, not a blueprint for corrective action. Any or all ideas utilized should be part of a larger, overall school program evaluation and planning process.

1.   A first step is to start having honest and open conversations at the school site with members of the school management team, the model facilitator, teachers, staff, perhaps some district personnel, and parents about their impressions of the changes (or lack thereof) brought about by the implementation of the model. Key questions to ask would include, "what has this school gained by implementing this model?" and "what does this school have left to accomplish in terms of making real gains in student achievement?" Schools might want to consider formally documenting this process by using the nine elements of WSR implementation as their measuring tool. It is important to include all members of the school community within these conversations. Most schools in the early cohorts choose models with limited information and are now working through the implications of not having adequate buy-in to support successful implementation. Now is the time to make sure that all voices are heard, that consensus is reached regarding issues left untouched by model implementation, and that everyone is able to participate in these conversations without fear.

2.   Next, sit down with staff from the developer (and district if relationships are good there) and discuss what the school feels has been accomplished and what still needs work. Together discuss whether the model developer can in fact address what still needs work. Key questions include, "does the developer have any specific expertise in addressing this problem?" "do they have the capacity to provide this help?" and "even given perfect implementation of our model, would this problem still exist; in other words, is this model just fundamentally unequipped to address this need?" In some instances, schools are likely to determine that the model is simply not equipped to address the issues, either because there was a fundamental lack of fit between the goals, needs, or capacity

of the school and the model itself. Reaching this conclusion, in and of itself, does not disparage either the school or the model.

3. Bring other supportive partners into the conversation from either the state department or district depending on where the relationships are good. Eventually, schools will need to rely on one or the other as an advocate to either encourage developers to change their practices, to find additional resources to address specific needs, or to ultimately support the process of discontinuing model implementation. Discuss what alternative sources of support are available from these resources. For instance, can the state, developer, or district provide additional external support in the form of consultants?

4. Take this conversation back to the school faculty. Move slowly through the conversation. Openly lay out the shortcomings identified by staff and parents and the potential responses offered by developer, district, and state departments. It is essential to not drive any particular solution through the process. Most problems in implementation have arisen because school folk feel limited buy-in, don't make the mistake of continuing the trend!

5. Finally, if a consensus emerges that the model is not effectively addressing the needs of the school and that it is not possible within the context of the model to make adjustments, leave the model.

APPENDIX C: INSTRUCTIONAL FACILITATOR ACTIVITY REPORT GUIDE

The full-time instructional facilitator will be involved in the active support of the campus faculty through various forms of engagement. In order for the principal (or whatever educational leader is designated) to properly monitor this person's activities, the mentor teacher/instructional facilitator will need to submit, to the principal, ongoing Activity Reports. These reports should be designed to provide a summary of the activities in which the mentor teacher/instructional facilitator was engaged for the week and some reflections as to the outcomes. Creating a standard format for the reporting of these activities is recommended. Each reporting document should be no longer than one page in length and include information on the following categories:

- **Site** – where the training, teaching or working sessions were held
- **Purpose** – A short statement of the reason for the activity and why it was needed.
- **Description of Activity** – A short description of what was done during the meeting/session/training.
- **Date**
- **Time** – To include both the length of time for the activity and start and end times.
- **Audience** – Who attended the session? Was the audience comprised of students, teachers, parents or administrators?
- **Grade Level** – When appropriate, the grade level of the students or teachers involved.
- **Number of participants** – How many people were in attendance. This will help to provide context as well as an understanding of the numbers of people being reached/served by the activities.
- **Reflections** – This is perhaps one of the most important components of the reporting document. Beyond the obvious reporting of facts, there should be some indication as to how the session progressed, whether or not it was well received, and in the SD's thinking, what future steps should be taken. The views of the SD can offer unique insights informing decisions for future work.

The use of a database program such as Filemaker Pro or an equivalent program is highly recommended for the creation of the reporting document. Creating a template in a database program allows for easy entry, access and retrieval of information. It also allows for the easy manipulation of data. The SD or principal can sort all of the data by simply selecting a relevant category or characteristic.
(source: Deanna Burney, 1997)

APPENDIX D: NYC COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT 2

One district that set about focusing on system-wide instructional improvement is Community School District 2 in New York City, a district that has an exceedingly diverse student population. The district runs down the east side of Central Park, and includes all of Manhattan south of 59th street except a small area on the Lower East Side. This means that the area has some of the highest priced residential and commercial real estate in the world (on the Upper East Side), some of the most densely populated poorer communities in the city (in Chinatown and Hell's Kitchen), and a substantial number of thriving middle-class families who take education seriously and will make substantial financial sacrifices to send their children to private school if necessary. District 2 is known for its comprehensive approach to school improvement through professional development. Elmore and Burney (1997) describe District 2's goal as one of "continuous improvement of teaching practice in all schools and classrooms across all areas of the curriculum." School superintendent Anthony Alvarado came on board in 1987, and set about making changes. As of 1997, the approach seemed to be working:

> In 1987 Community School District 2 ranked 10th in the city in reading and fourth in mathematics out of 32 districts. In 1996, it ranked second in reading and second in mathematics. These gains occurred during a time in which the number of immigrant students in the district increased and the student population grew more linguistically diverse and economically poor. Many of the immigrants entering school came with less education and linguistic development than had previously been the case. Yet improvements in the quality of teaching have proved more powerful than these challenges to the achievement of students. (Elmore and Burney, 1997 p. 6)

APPENDIX E: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION GUIDE

In a typical lesson, the principal should be able to see several things: high level of constructivist teaching, standards-based materials available, assessment integrated with instruction, and student participation. There should also be ongoing support in the form of weekly grade level or cross grade meetings and training sessions where there is an opportunity for teachers to organize materials and share strategies and concerns.

In order to appropriately assess the level of progress that the school has made in its standards-based curriculum implementation efforts, the principal and leadership team will need to be able to identify the characteristics of standards-based curriculum implementation at both the classroom and school wide level. Some of the key elements of full implementation of standards-based instruction in the classroom that fully engages students are:

- Teachers teach a high level standards-based curriculum to all students.

- Teachers interact with students in ways that facilitate student higher-order thinking skills.

- Teachers adapt curriculum and instruction to student background to "stretch" all students without watering down or making unreachable the content and strategies.

- Teachers can identify those students meeting standards, which need help, and what plans are in place for those next steps for all students.

- Teachers connect content material with other disciplines.

- Teachers facilitate problem solving using multiple perspectives and strategies.

- Students engage in inquiry-based activities. There is an increasing effort to teach in a hands-on constructivist manner ("Constructivism" is an approach to education that views the teacher as more a facilitator of learning than an instructor of pre-determined skills and facts. Students are encouraged to take more control of their course of study than in conventional classrooms. They are also encouraged to work in teams, to tackle problems that do not necessarily have one answer and work on long-range projects.).

- Students can talk knowledgeably about how their work does/does not meet standards-based criteria.

- Students use technology to gather data and information and solve open-ended problems or complete open-ended assignments.

- Students develop and investigate problems or issues, which they themselves have generated.

- Students record, analyze, interpret and present data or information to communicate both their problem solving processes and outcomes.

- Students work in teams, as well as individually, for learning and problem solving.

- Exercises are based upon "real-life" experiences or situations.

- Physical arrangements of the classroom facilitate group discussions while being flexible enough to allow for individual study and research.

- Classroom walls display meaningful student work and content standards and rubrics (criteria for judging student work).

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