33/44

NEW JERSEY
STAR SCHOOLS
2002-2003 APPLICATION

RESPONSES to the information below and the statements must be ANONYMOUS. No reference should be made to the names of the district, the school or the community. Use the words "the school" in referring to the applicant in the responses to the statements.

The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application:

Type of School	**Grade Levels**	**School Enrollment** 957 students
____ Elementary School	_____	**Name of the School's Specialization or Whole-School Reform Model**
____ Middle School	_____	
____ Junior High School	_____	Service-Learning
X High School	9 - 12	
____ Other: _____	_____	

Location:
____ Urban/city; ____ Suburban with urban characteristics; X Suburban; ____ Small City/Town; _____ Rural

Previous Star School: Yes __ No X If Yes, Year(s) _____

KEYBOARDED RESPONSES to the statements below must be **no more than a total of five pages. Keyboard the statement followed by the response.**

1. Describe the school's specialization or whole-school reform model and its objectives, the student educational needs and the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards,** that it addresses. Detail how it promotes high student achievement and contributes to school-wide accomplishments.

2. Describe the professional development activities and research of the school's faculty. Detail to what extent these activities contribute to exemplary teaching practices in their classrooms. Explain the link between these activities and the specialization or whole-school reform model.

3. Describe the leadership style of the school's administration and how the management and educational program demonstrate administrative and fiscal efficiency. Describe any innovative scheduling and/or management strategies implemented.

4. Describe the school's overall approach to assessment. How are your methods aligned to the specialization or whole-school reform model? How are you ensuring that the content you are measuring is consistent with the *Core Curriculum Content Standards?* Provide student performance data for the school years 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 using state tests and, if you wish, national and/or district standardized norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced tests, and/or alternative assessments. Explain any dramatic increase or decrease. Specify which groups, if any, are excluded from the assessments for which you provide data. Give the percentage of students excluded. You may use a chart.

5. Describe collaborative efforts with families, business, the community, school districts, and/or higher education that contribute to a school environment governed by the students' needs and promoting high student achievement.

6. **Previous Star School Winners Only:** Provide a one-page addendum to your application that describes efforts to expand or replicate the specialization or whole-school reform model within the school and/or the district. Have there been dissemination activities beyond the school or district? If so, please elaborate.

*The 2002 edition of the ***Core Curriculum Content Standards*** published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's website at http://www.state.nj.us/education.

6appss.20

1. Describe the school's specialization or whole-school reform and its objectives, the student educational needs and the specific core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards that it addresses. Detail how it promotes high student achievement and contributes to school-wide accomplishments.

A visitor to our high school, just passing through the rotunda, can quickly see the signs of our school's specialization - **service-learning.** A large banner proclaims us a "National Service-Learning Leader School," five NJ Department of Education "Best Practices" honor diverse programs (all with service components), and four awards from the National Character Education Partnership also pay tribute to our innovative service initiatives. Dotting the corridor are candid shots of students in action engaged in service activities in music, art, English, science, family and consumer sciences and social studies. Clearly, service-learning is a strong force in our high school with ***90% of our faculty, and ALL our student body engaged in some type of service-learning at the present time.***

Our school's successful integration of service into the curriculum is the result of five years of collaborative efforts on the part of the administration, faculty, students and community. In 1998 a discussion of *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution* caused us to recognize a real need to connect our curriculum with real life. We had already seen great value in service in our co-curricular program. We now moved to make structured and reflective service as an effective educational method that would enhance our curriculum and fulfill the goal uttered in our mission statement of guiding our students to "lead a life of consequence." **We designed interdisciplinary units for each year with a service component**: **freshmen produce a CONquest** portfolio with ten assignments on a life of consequence; **sophomores participate in "Diversity"** that stresses service promoting tolerance; **juniors** use math and science for service projects in **"Community as a Classroom."** Seniors this year serve as underclassmen mentors in a pilot project, **"Learning to Lead through Service."** A "Learn and Serve America" grant has expanded our program that is listed in ERIC, and has added two service-learning coordinators. Each discipline keeps an updated portfolio of service in the curriculum.

Four major factors contribute to the successful integration of service-learning in our curriculum: a) effective professional development on service-learning b) creating our own service-learning Web site with national link c) using the expansion of service-learning as a Middle States "Accreditation for Growth" goal and d) including service in all new academic and club initiatives. **The objectives of this specialization are**:

- To increase academic achievement and personal growth by providing students with real life experiences for applying the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom.
- To establish close relationships with the community, making it a partner in education.
- To unite civic responsibility with the reading, writing, technological, content and workplace skills articulated in the Core Curriculum Standards.
- To develop the habit of "giving back to the community" through service..

At the 2001 NJ School Boards Convention, our administrator showed how service-learning specifically implemented the Core Curriculum Standards while fostering character education. Our many programs address the Cross-Content Workplace Skills by developing occupational skills (CCW 1), utilizing technology (CCW 2), stressing problem-solving and critical thinking (CCW3) and self-management skills/cooperative work (CCW 4). The following is a bird's eye view of service-learning in the curriculum:

Subject	Service-Learning	Standards
Language Arts	Produced a public service video with another school via video conferencing.	LAL 3.1; 3.2; 3.3; 3.4; 3.5
Fine Arts	Created children's storybooks to be given to school libraries; students read to 1st graders.	LAL 3.3, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4; VPA 1.2, 1.3
Social Studies	Worked with senior citizens in a sociology unit; Designed a brochure on the role of the town in the Civil War; Videotaped oral histories.	SS 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6; LAL 3.1; 3.2; 3.3; 3.4; 3.5.
Physical Education	Peer Facilitators teach a program on bullying and drug awareness to elementary schools.	HPE 2.1, 2.2, 2.3; LAL 3.1, 3.2
Foods	Helps needy families by cooking meals, giving gifts. Organized fund-raiser picnic after 9/11.	Math 4.9; LAL 3.2; 3.3; CCW 1-5.
Ready, Set, Teach	Conducted lessons to the faculty on how the brain works and multiple intelligences.	LAL 3.1; 3.2; 3.3; 3.4; Science 5.2, 5.3.
Environmental Science	Taught science lessons via "Pairing & Sharing" grant to urban elementary school	Science 5.6, 5.7; LAL 3.1; 3.2; 3.5

This specialization has produced many school-wide accomplishments. The "Great Public Schools Showcase" at the NJEA '01 convention displayed four of our service programs; the *National Schools of Character* published four of our exemplary practices. Our school's astronomical rise (a leap of 15 places) in *NJ Magazine's* "Top 75 High Schools" parallels the growth of service-learning that has revitalized instruction. At a televised Board presentation, our students explained the way service had enhanced their learning.

2. Describe the professional development activities and research of the school's faculty. Detail to what extent these activities contribute to exemplary teaching practices in their classrooms. Explain the link between these activities and the specialization or whole-school reform model.

For the past three years, service-learning has been part of our professional development. The opening day session of 2000 contained a service-learning overview, followed by four interactive sessions led by our teachers trained at the National Service-Learning Leader School Conference in Washington: *Technology and Service; Effective Service Projects in the Electives: Hands-on Learning for Reluctant Learners and Meaningful Ecology Projects in Science.* In 2001 the AFG Planning, Action and Implementation Teams devoted sessions to service-learning, and supervisors led their faculty in developing strategies integrating it into the curriculum. This year our October full-day session showcased the role of service-learning in differentiating instruction.

In a quest to find an instructional model that would stimulate active learning, our district has adopted "Understanding by Design" by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, a protocol based on current research and effective learning practices. In district seminars, teachers form teams that examine the learning process and exchange ways in which to use essential questions, assessment strategies and new techniques. The theories of other educational experts have also enhanced our teaching: David Sousa on brain-based research; Maurice Elias on emotional intelligence; Richard Lavoie on individual differences; Charlotte Danielson on effective teaching; Erica Runyan on rubrics.

Research on assessment results has also shaped professional development. Vertical teams, studying the results of AP exams, SAT and HSPA, collaborate to improve teaching. The English department produced two useful books to guide literature and

writing instruction. An SAT Data Bank, designed by math teachers, appropriated SAT exercises to lower levels. When females lagged behind males in math and technology, our gender initiative, the Technofilles, helped to increase female enrollment 23% in AP Calculus, and 18% in Web design. **"Teachers teaching teachers"** is a core element of our professional development, shown in our annual *Celebration of Learning Week* that accents exemplary teaching practices in the classroom. More than 45 classes open their doors to the entire faculty; substitutes are available so teachers can see many "masters" at work during the time. ***This year's focus: service-learning and differentiated instruction.***

3.Describe the leadership style of the school's administration and how the management and educational program demonstrates administrative and fiscal efficiency. Describe any innovative scheduling and/or management strategies implemented.

The sign, "We honor TRADITION, we shape TOMORROW by working as a TEAM," that welcomes students is not an empty slogan; it truly describes the leadership style of our administration. Every morning the administrative team (principal, supervisor of academic affairs, dean of students, director of guidance, athletic director) meets to discuss current issues and possible changes. From these meetings has evolved the impetus for our personalized freshman orientation program, a lengthening of instructional periods, and initiating summer programs. However, none of these ideas would become realities without other teams: the cabinet (principal and supervisors, focusing on instruction; Faculty Advisory Council (teachers, administrators), giving teacher concerns; Principal's Advisory Committee (administrators, teachers, students, parents, community leaders) and the Principal's Open Discussion meetings, adding vital community input.

Creating a separate office for academic affairs has been an innovation that has truly honored instruction. Freed of bureaucratic tasks, one administrator focuses on raising the academic level in both college and non-college classes. Serving on the school and district professional development committees, she conducts needs assessments and works directly with teachers and students to create new programs. As the service-learning project director, she makes certain that all new initiatives, such as Excelsior Project to raise the bar for the middle student, the Scholars' Circle, an enrichment program for the top 10%, and "Share the Dream" for minority students – have a service component.

After an intensive study of block scheduling in 1997-8, the school voted to retain its present system of eight daily periods; however, it uses the zero period for peer, math, music and automotive programs. We also run four different summer programs: a traditional remediation session; a university-level program for the gifted, an enrichment one for middle-level freshmen, and "college prep" seminars for upper classmen.

Consistent patterns over the last 5 years point to strong fiscal efficiency. Compared to the state average, the ratio of students to faculty is lower, students to administrators is higher, and yet the total average cost of educating a student ($10,473 in '01-02), is lower (state average: $11,039). Rental of school facilities results in additional revenue used for educational needs. Moreover, the community consistently passes the school budget. The '02 Middle States Report found the budget "*healthy* with a 6% surplus."

4. Describe the school's overall approach to assessment. How are your methods aligned to the specialization or whole-school reform model? How are you ensuring that the content you are measuring is consistent with the Core Curriculum Standards? Provide student performance data for the years 2000-2001 and 2001 and 2002 using state tests

and, if you wish, national and/or district standardized norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced tests, and/or alternative assessments. Explain any dramatic increase or decrease. Specify which groups, if any, are excluded from the assessments for which you provide data. Give the percentage of students excluded. You may use a chart

Committed to the total development of all learners through differentiated instruction, we utilize multiple assessments in addition to traditional midterms, finals and quizzes. Polling of our teachers indicated that 100% of the faculty used reflective essays, technological, group and project assignments; 70%, journals: 81% of English and social studies, research papers; 100% of music, applied technology and art, performances; 100% of art, portfolios. Moreover, speeches, debates, multimedia productions and specific exit exams (e.g. Cisco Academy, Auto CAD) serve as additional criteria. Students receive technological self-assessment surveys. **Rubrics serve as guides to the grading of our interdisciplinary units, portfolios and service projects.** Last year 95% of our freshmen successfully completed a CON*quest* portfolio with 217 or 90.79% completing a service project. Of the junior class, 72% completed a service project in *Community as a Classroom*. Teachers indicate appropriate Core Curriculum Standards on their lesson plans. Since department supervisors examine lessons, midterms and finals, there is double assurance that standards are being measured.

Our students have consistently performed well on national and state tests. All Grade 9 and 10 students take the norm-referenced Test of Achievement & Proficiency. The results in Table 1 show that we have exceeded the national average for the last two years in both the composite score and subtest scores by more than ¾ standard deviation. ***All students including special education were included. Scores are reported in NCEs.***

Table 1. Test of Achievement &Proficiency – Grades 9,10; Riverside Publisher, 1996

SCHOOL SCORES	Grade 9 2001-2002	Grade 9 2000-2001	Grade 10 2001-2002	Grade 10 2000-2001
Total or Composite	69.3	70.5	69.0	69.1
Number Tested	227	232	234	234
% of Total Tested	99.6	97.5	99.6	96.7
Subtest: Verbal	68.0	~67.6	66.8	67.7
Subt: Math	72.2	70.1	69.1	68.6
Subtest: Writing	65.8	68.5	65.7	66.5
NATIONAL SCORES Total or Composite	**50.0**	**50.0**	**50.0**	**50.0**
Subtest Scores: Reading, Math, Writing	**50.0**	**50.0**	**50.0**	**50.0**
Subtest: Standard Deviations for Reading, Math, Writing	**21.06**	**21.06**	**21.06**	**21.06**

Our students performed excellently in the state HSPT and HSPA ('02); the *Star-Ledger* hailed us as a **"school that exceeded its expectations"** for "exceeding the performance of its DFG by 5.9% for the previous 5 years."

TABLE 2: High School Proficiency Test Grade 11 - NJ Dept. of Ed. –	2000-01	1999-00	Table 3: HS Proficiency Assessment Gr. 11 – NJ Dept. of Ed. -	March 2002
SCHOOL SCORES: Total/ Composite	None	None	**SCHOOL: Total/Composite**	None
Number of Students Tested	204	202	Number of Students Tested	227
% of Total Students Tested	88%	89.3%	% of Total Students Tested	99%
Number of Students Excluded	29	24	Number of Students excluded	5
% of Students Excluded	12%	10.7	% of Students Excluded	1%
SUBTEST SCORES: Reading	399.2	400.4	Advanced Proficient or	84.2%

			proficient in both areas. **(At Advanced: 11.8%)**	
SUBTEST: Mathematics	426.2	420.9	**SUBTEST: Language**	
SUBTEST: Writing	400.0	374.9	Partially Proficient	6.2%
STATE SUBTEST SCORES: Reading	369.7	371.9	At or Above Proficient	69.2%
STATE SUBTEST: Mathematics	396.6	395.0	At Advanced	24.7%
STATE SUBTEST: Writing	371.8	352.3	**SUBTEST: Mathematics**	
GH SUBTEST: Reading	386.7	390.9	Partially Proficient	13.2%
GH SUBTEST: Math	416.9	415.4	At or Above Proficient	56.4%
GH SUBTEST: Writing	382.9	361.7	At Advanced	30.4%

Table 2 shows our three HSPT subtests scores are significantly higher than those of the state and DFG. Differences in reporting '01 and '02 score data make true comparisons impossible .Our SAT Performance is also above the state average. In 2002 and 2001, our total composite scores were 1068 and 1067 compared to the state composite averages of 1011 and 1012. In '02, we have 4 National Merit Semi-finalists and 9 Commended students. Advanced Placement participation is also growing with 70% of our students earning a grade of 3 or better in 233 examinations taken in 19 different disciplines in 2002; 196 examinations were taken in 17 disciplines in 2001. In additional awards for civic involvement, our art club won a national Fleet Bank Award and our Scholars' Circle won the local Chamber of Commerce Award. The National School Boards Association and the CEO Forum of Technology honored our exemplary infusion of technology into the curriculum.

5. Describe collaborative efforts with families, business, the community, school districts and/or higher education that contribute to a school environment governed by the students' needs and promoting high student achievement.

Teamwork serves as the energizing spirit of our school, family and community partnerships by reinforcing our goal of developing academic, social, athletic growth in ALL students. In addition to strong family partnerships (PTA, Booster Club, PTC, Project Graduation), our school has close ties with the Town Council, the Historical Society, Downtown Management Corporation, and Senior Citizens, particularly for service projects. We held a fall Service-Learning Fair at which 15 community organizations visited our school to solicit volunteers. The community is invited each May to our *COOL Teachers Workshops* taught by our students in the electives. Connections to higher education also enhance academic life. The Career Center at Union County College enables students to network with employers, and our Career Pathways and Coop Program work cooperatively with it and the Chamber of Commerce. Seton Hall University provides interns and student teachers; Essex County College and De Vry conducted computer workshops. We offer Middle College credit through Fairleigh Dickinson, bridge transfer credit through Union County College, and our environmental students work with Cook College. Our role as a National Service-Learning Leader has also enlarged our contact with other districts. We joined another school with whom we share a Distance Learning grant in two presentations about service-learning, we have mentored two districts for service-learning, and we have been the presenters at seven state conferences, showcasing our program. According to our Middle States Report, "What a visitor senses...is the strong air of collaboration among stakeholders." Teamwork and service - by creating a caring community we have paved our path to academic excellence.