

SHARON CHRISTA MCAULIFFE MIDDLE SCHOOL

III - SUMMARY 12CA28

McAuliffe Middle School, home of the Eagles, is in Los Alamitos, a suburban area in north Orange County. Our neighborhood school serves the communities of Rossmoor, Seal Beach and Los Alamitos with 1,285 students in grades 6, 7 and 8. McAuliffe is one of two middle schools in the highly regarded Los Alamitos Unified School District. From 1968 through 1984 our school was known as Pine Junior High School and in 1985, the school was renamed Sharon Christa McAuliffe Middle School in honor of America's first teacher in space, whose life was lost in the Challenger tragedy.

McAuliffe has a long tradition of providing students with a rigorous academic curriculum delivered in a caring, nurturing environment. Our mission statement underscores that commitment: *The mission for McAuliffe is to educate all students intellectually, socially, and physically in a safe environment: to provide citizens with an appreciation and respect for learning and democratic ideals, and to cultivate citizens who will celebrate the diversity of all cultures.* Staff, students, and parents view the attainment of this goal as a shared responsibility. Stakeholders have opportunities to plan and implement academic and extracurricular activities through involvement in Parent/Teacher Association (PTA), School Site Council (SSC), Curriculum Steering Committee, student government/leadership, staff meetings, parent nights, and open door sessions.

The McAuliffe campus is beautiful with large McAuliffe Eagle murals spread throughout our recently modernized campus. In our corridors, halls, and display cases, beautiful student art is proudly displayed. Among the several acres of grass fields is our outdoor amphitheater adjoined by our multi-purpose room which is used for assemblies and well as community events. Our modern media center houses a vast collection of books and resources for our middle school readers as well as five technology labs that are used daily in various capacities. Our school modernization has transformed our campus to one of beauty and with the latest technology installed in every classroom. Teachers use Eno boards, document cameras, wireless networks, networked printers, United Streaming, student response systems, and DVD players as teaching tools to provide optimal learning. Teachers use their Internet home pages to post homework and announcements as well as use online grading to keep parents abreast of their children's progress.

McAuliffe's highly qualified staff (75% have earned their master's degrees) use a collaborative model of teaching to create a standards-based, rich curriculum which meets the needs of our diverse group of learners. These educators work together to create a student-centered learning environment of the highest caliber. In 2010, the State adopted the Common Core Standards (CCS) in the areas of English-language arts and math. McAuliffe is beginning to move forward with the implementation of CCS and is following the model of the California Department of Education's *A Blueprint for Great Schools*. Our staff realizes that students must know how to apply their rigorous academic knowledge to real-life situations, and we are excited to begin our implementation of the CCS.

The staff prides itself on our diverse student population which includes 19% Hispanic, 17% Asian, 3% Black/African American, 56% White, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native and 6% other. Parents move specifically into the district to have their children attend McAuliffe, and many (35%) withstand inconveniences to transport their children to McAuliffe on inter-district transfer permits.

McAuliffe is a high achieving school. Our signature practices have helped increase student achievement and assist with closing the achievement gap especially with our significant sub-groups. Our Academic Performance Index (API) from 1999-2000 to 2010-2011 has grown from 804 points to 931 points. We have increased our API by **127 points!** In 2010-2011, we met 21 out of 21 of our Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals. We have met our AYP goals every year since its inception. In addition, McAuliffe was awarded three California Distinguished School Awards (1996, 2003, and 2009). McAuliffe's professional learning community believes that we will do whatever it takes to increase student learning and close any achievement gaps. This year we've placed an emphasis on common assessments and collaboration. Our staff has worked diligently to create standards-based common assessments in English-language arts, math,

science, and history-social science.

McAuliffe prides itself on our Response to Intervention (RtI) model. It has helped us target students' needs and provide appropriate intervention including intervention classes that are offered before school, during the school day, after school and even on Saturdays to support student learning and help close achievement gaps. As part of our RtI model, teacher advocates support struggling students by meeting with them before and after school to assist them in their areas of need.

There is a balance between activities and academics on campus. The Eagle Spirit Program (ESP) promotes service to the school and community while the California Junior Scholarship (CJSF) recognizes outstanding academic achievement. The Student Extracurricular Activity Program (SEACAP) encourages students to exhibit appropriate citizenship and scholarship. Students are given rewards throughout the year for citizenship and academics. The McAuliffe activities program includes a variety of sports, student leadership, choral and instrumental performance groups, thirty student clubs, Spelling Bee, music, various field trips, musicals, plays, art contests, and assemblies. Eagle Express cards are distributed to students who are "taking care of business" by doing what they should. These Eagles Express cards are submitted to a drawing for students to receive reward prizes.

McAuliffe Middle School has Eagle pride for our outstanding staff, phenomenal students and supportive parents!

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS 12CA28

1. Assessment Results:

In the spring, all California schools participate in the administration of the California Standardized Testing and Report (STAR) Program. The purpose of the STAR program is to measure how well students are learning the skills and knowledge identified in the California content standards. The standards describe what students at each grade level should know and be able to do in English-language arts, mathematics, science, and history-social science.

STAR Student Reports provide overall scaled scores, performance levels, and reporting cluster results (subject strands) for each California Standards Test (CST). Overall scores are reported on a scale ranging from 150-600. In addition, results for the CSTs are reported by performance levels: advanced, proficient, basic, below basic, or far below basic. Each performance level indicates how well a student has achieved on the state standards tested. The state and McAuliffe target is for all students to attain the proficient or advanced level on the CSTs.

McAuliffe Middle School students did exceedingly well in all curricular areas of the California Standards Test. Comparing the 2006-2007 to 2010-2011 school years, in ELA, McAuliffe students meeting the proficient level increased an average of 9% across grade levels. Comparing 2006-2007 to 2010-2011 school years, students meeting the advanced level increased by 8%. This data reveals that McAuliffe students continue to improve every year in ELA including our four subgroups: White, Hispanic, Asian, and Economically Disadvantaged. When comparing 2006-2007 to 2010-2011 school years, McAuliffe's White student population considered proficient, increased by 3%. Our Hispanic group grew by 8%. Our Asian population increased by 1% and the Economically Disadvantaged group increased by 13%! The number of students who scored advanced on the CSTs has increased including all four our subgroups in ELA and math.

McAuliffe math students are smart as evidenced by our data. Comparing 2006-2007 to 2010-2011 school years, McAuliffe students considered proficient in math remained consistent but our students considered advanced increased by a whopping 16%! In 2010-2011, 75% of our students were considered proficient or advanced while 59% of our students were in the advanced category. McAuliffe's subgroups did just as well. In looking at the five year data, the White student population increased by 5% as did our Asian population. We are proud that our Hispanic population increased by 21% and our Economically

Disadvantaged students increased by 17%. These statistics show that McAuliffe is working hard to close achievement gaps.

McAuliffe students exceeded the state's Academic Performance Index (API) growth target again this year. Our API grew from 909 in 2007 to 931 in 2011. An increase of 22 points when a school is already over 900 is considered to be exceptional. Each year we have outperformed the base API that the state recommends. Every school in California is expected to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and we have once again exceeded our AYP goals in all significant subgroups tested. In 2011, McAuliffe met 21 out of 21 target goals.

McAuliffe Middle School has closed achievement gaps. In math, all of our subgroups exceeded the number of overall students who were proficient. Our students were 76% percent proficient or advanced in math. Our White population was 86%, our Hispanic population was 77%, our Asian population is 96% and our Economically Disadvantaged was 78%. In English-Language Arts, 87% of students are proficient or advanced. All of our sub-groups are close to the 87% or exceed it. Our school staff has worked hard to ensure that there is no more than a 10% gap between our overall school scores and our significant subgroups.

We can attribute our exceptional test scores to our rigorous curriculum and exceptional, highly trained staff. In addition, our Professional Learning Communities frequently collaborate to discuss student learning, best practices, and instructional strategies. When these groups meet, data from common site assessments and district benchmarks are discussed and plans for instructional improvement are made. We also pride ourselves on providing timely interventions for struggling students who are in need of extra time, instruction, and support. These interventions are held before school, during the school day, and after school. To provide a student-staff connection and to help assist our struggling learners, teachers have become advocates for students on campus. In other words, every teacher meets with their select number of students to assist them with homework, prepare for quizzes and tests, or just provide a place and time for one-on-one discussions about school and home.

2. Using Assessment Results:

STAR program test results are used for different purposes. They are used to communicate with parents and guardians, making informed decisions needed to support student achievement, evaluating school programs, and providing data for state and federal accountability programs. The parent reports give information regarding their child's achievement and should be compared to school grades, classroom tests and quizzes, and school work to get a complete profile of their child's academic achievement.

Every year, teachers conduct "test chats" with their students. They share the student's STAR data with them and help the student create goals for the year. Later, students are recognized for their STAR achievements at an assembly hosted by our principal.

Every summer, after test scores have been received, McAuliffe's principal, assistant principal, and counselor review the test scores of every student. Using the test scores and data from other multiple measures, student class placements are considered. Placement in intervention programs are planned for those students in need of additional assistance. Using data from other multiple measures and students who do extremely well on the California Standards Tests are considered for Gifted and Talented identification. STAR data is sent to our district-wide Data Director program which is a comprehensive storehouse for all of our school, district, and state assessments. Data Director provides the tools to the McAuliffe staff so that they can analyze state and local assessment data (our benchmark assessments), summative and formative assessments, teacher created tests, and demographic information. This program assists teachers in identifying students' areas of need and helps develop a plan for improving student achievement. With Data Director, teachers and administrators analyze state, district, and classroom data to help create outstanding instructional programs. Teachers frequently use this data to collaborate in their Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to help determine best practices in assessment, instruction and to assist with curriculum mapping.

Data Director also allows us to compile and disaggregate data. This data is reviewed by the school staff and areas of strength and weakness are identified. The information helps us determine the extent to which students are learning the academic standards (and soon the Common Core State Standards), instructional areas that can be improved, teacher strategies that can be developed to address the needs of students, and help decide how to use school funds to ensure that students meet or exceed the standards. The McAuliffe principal meets with the school leadership team to discuss and analyze data. This information is shared in subject and grade level PLCs. The school leadership team takes the information learned from the staff and uses the STAR data to provide direction in writing curricular and staff development goals for McAuliffe's Single Plan for Student Achievement (School Plan). Once the goals are written, action plans are taken to help McAuliffe achieve their intended goals.

For example, math teachers review chapter test scores and students who receive a D or less are identified as needing an intervention for that particular mathematics unit. The classroom teachers send home a letter to the parents inviting the students to attend an after school math program where a credentialed teacher reteaches the mathematics unit. At the end of the two-week course, students are allowed to re-take the test for a higher grade. In the past few years, we have embraced the Response to Intervention model. We not only offer math interventions after school, we offer four Math Intervention sections during the school day. These classes are fluid allowing students to enter or exit depending on their success or struggles in their regular math classes. The math teachers did not want to forget about our grade level or even advanced students who need extra help. The math department teachers rotate a regularly scheduled math study hall where students may receive extra help in math before and after school. We have seen a huge success with these programs in that the numbers of sixth grade students considered proficient or advanced in math increased by 9% in one year! In the same year, the numbers of sixth grade students considered advanced in math increased by more than 5%.

3. Sharing Lessons Learned:

McAuliffe has a reputation of sharing its successes with other schools. Every other month, the *School News Roll Call*, is distributed throughout the community. This newspaper publishes individual articles about schools in the Los Alamitos Unified School District. Each article highlights a particular event or activity that has been successful at each school site. Articles range in topics from exciting science projects, special field trips, television broadcasts, or a fun, student musical. In the December/January 2012 issue, McAuliffe shared the news about our Academic Performance Index increasing by 11 points for a score of 931! The article also stated that three of our subgroups were number one in Orange County. In addition, Mr. Sackett, our principal, shared the types and number of clubs and sports that we have on campus.

In November, our assistant principal, conducted a staff development workshop based on Robert Marzano's book, *The Highly Engaged Learner*. It was so well received by the staff that the district administrators asked her to do the same workshop for them as well as all of the principals in the district. She shared best practices that we use at McAuliffe so that others can learn from our high achieving school.

At the district level, we frequently have "round table" discussions at administrators' meetings, teacher leadership team meetings, and counselors' meetings. Best practices and school successes are shared with each other in a collegial atmosphere to the betterment of all schools. Articulation between grade levels is a district priority goal as well as a district value. Articulation meetings are held annually to professionally dialog important curriculum issues, to increase staff communication, and to provide a good transition for students between elementary and middle school and from the middle school to the high school. The purpose of the articulation meetings is to discuss skills, needs and strengths seen using the standards as a foundation, and to discuss strategies that are working well. The school district has recently started a Twitter account where schools are asked to Twitter good news about recent events on campus.

Teachers and administrators from other schools and districts visit McAuliffe to get ideas for their own sites. When asked why they chose McAuliffe to visit, they mention our outstanding reputation, our California Distinguished School awards, our high test scores and our frequent publicity in the *Orange County Register*

which recently named us (and for the past several years) one of the top ten middle schools in Orange County. We received their “gold medal” award for being exceptional. We think we are too!

4. Engaging Families and Communities:

We are fortunate to work in such a supportive community. Parents are involved in nearly every aspect of our school program. The best strategy that we use at McAuliffe is keeping the parents informed and using their support to provide the best experience for their students. An extensive communication network has kept our parents abreast of what is going on at school and in their child’s classroom.

Annually, McAuliffe Middle School opens our campus to fifth grade parents who are anxious to get a peek at the middle school. The administrative team presents information about the middle school program and leads tours through classrooms. These tours give parents an opportunity to not only see our middle school “in action” but ask questions as well. The tours also give teachers and administrators an opportunity to boast to the fifth grade parents regarding McAuliffe’s successes. Multiple tours are offered to meet parents’ scheduling needs. At the end of each tour, parents reconvene with the principal and assistance principal to ask questions that may have not been answered on the tour.

At the conclusion of the parent tours, an after school student tour is offered where students listen to a presentation from our principal and learn more about the culture of being a McAuliffe Eagle. Teachers open their classrooms to meet and greet students and parents. Over 30 student interest clubs set up booths to disseminate club information and answer students’ questions. The PTA provides snacks and drinks to help create a climate of a student social to ease fifth graders anxiousness about starting middle school.

We pride ourselves in our frequent communication with parents. Each teacher has his or her own website where homework and announcements are posted. Many teachers post useful links so that students have access to other resources outside of the classroom. Email, online grades, phone calls, voice mail, auto dialers, email group messages, progress reports, report cards, and signed quizzes and tests are various ways that keep parents informed about their student. Parents and teachers also communicate during the fall and spring at parent-teacher conferences, and speak informally before or after school, at Open House, Back to School Night, and GATE Parent Night. The principal shares overall student performance at PTA meetings, on our website, the *School News Roll Call*, the fifth grade parent tours, School Site Council meetings, the annual televised school program presentations to the Board of Education and even our marquee! Our local newspaper, *The Orange County Register*, also publishes the results of our STAR testing. During the summer, the district mails home individual state assessment results reports and provides a series of pamphlets on how to interpret student results.

The McAuliffe teachers keep parents informed about how to best help their struggling student. We do this is through our Response to Intervention model. One way that we identify math students who need extra assistance is how successful they are on their math chapter tests. If students receive a D or below on their test, the parents receive a letter inviting their child to attend an after school math intervention class and the opportunity for the student to re-take the test for a higher grade once they complete the two-week course. This has been very successful with students and the parents appreciate the extra support.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION 12CA28

1. Curriculum:

McAuliffe’s curriculum, under the guidance of our district’s Curriculum Steering Committee, is a direct reflection of our vision statement, state frameworks, common core state standards, *No Child Left Behind* requirements, California’s *A Blueprint for Great Schools, Every Child a Reader, State Quality Criteria for Middle Grades, Taking Center Stage*, and model curriculum guides. Collaboratively agreed upon departmental and district continuums are evaluated to stay abreast of current educational practices and reforms in middle school education. Curricular leaders facilitate bimonthly meetings at which new curriculum information is shared. The curricular teams discuss, reflect, and plan implementation strategies. Frequently, student work as well as current district benchmark and/or STAR data is shared and discussed. School Based Program Coordination Days are used to create time for staffs to meet across the district by

grade level and/or subject area to maintain a well-defined and articulated curriculum.

Reading and Language Arts is a two-period core class with an emphasis on the content standards including all of the elements of language arts: written and oral English language conventions, listening and speaking strategies, writing strategies and applications; reading comprehension, word analysis, fluency, and systematic vocabulary development. Students are required to know how to write a summary, a response to literature, and persuasive and narrative essays. Students read a variety of text including the anthology, novels, and informational text. 87 % of our students were considered proficient or advanced in English language arts in the 2011 school year. The English-language arts teachers have worked diligently in improving this score by 9% over the last five years.

The McAuliffe mathematics program follows the standards outlined in the *California Mathematics Framework*, but teachers are in a transitional phase moving towards the adoption of the Common Core Standards. Our mathematics program provides a balance in computational and procedural basic skills, conceptual understanding, and problem solving. Teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to optimize student learning. Many intervention programs are in place to assist the struggling math student (additional information listed in Part IV). Our math students are doing well. In 2011, over 75% of our total student population is considered proficient or advanced in math. 59% of our students were considered advanced in math. While the total number of students proficient or advanced remained constant over the past five years, the number of students considered advanced increased by 16%! We can attribute these gains to a variety of factors including quality instruction, the rigor of the curriculum, new instructional materials, and more opportunities for struggling students to receive additional help.

Our science department has created an outstanding program as evidenced by the fact that 93% of our eighth grade students are considered proficient or advanced in science! In sixth grade, students learn about earth science including plate tectonics, volcanoes, ocean, and the Earth's structure. In seventh grade, students learn about life science including cells, reproduction, and plant and animal life. Our eighth graders learn about physical science including chemistry and physics. A family life program is taught at all three grade levels.

McAuliffe social science curriculum was created using the *History-Social Science Content Standards* (1998). Students in grade six are taught about the people and events in major western and non-western ancient civilizations, the geography and the understanding of people and their role in developing the economic, social and political structures of that time period. In seventh grade, students learn about the medieval and early modern times and civilizations and their ideas, beliefs, commodities, and technology. Students learn about the importance of the Enlightenment and how it created the rise of democratic ideas. In eighth grade, students learn about United States history and geography. Special emphasis is placed on the issues, ideas, and events that formed the Constitution and events through World War I. In eighth grade, all California students take the STAR test which includes a cumulative social science portion which includes what students learned in grades 6-8. 83% of our eighth grade students were considered proficient or advanced in history-social science.

All students are required to take daily physical education classes. Students are tested throughout the year for physical fitness gains. These results are sent to the state where the information is reported back to the school, district, and in the media. Looking at our data compared to schools around our county we far exceed the median scores. Students also stay physically fit by participating in our lunchtime intramural sports program. These sports include basketball, flag football, soccer, track, and volleyball. An annual track meet is held and the winners of the meet compete with our rival middle school. Students who arrive early to school also have the opportunity to play basketball before school starts. Every day over 75 students can be found shooting hoops before their school day begins! Teaching nutrition and healthy choices is an integral part of the physical fitness curriculum and is taught at all grade levels. The science department is responsible for teaching a drug prevention program, *Too Good for Drugs*. An anti-bullying program, *Too Good for Violence*, is taught through the English-language arts department.

Listening, speaking, reading, writing, and critical thinking are practiced and assessed in every classroom. Thinking creatively and problem solving are important components in all instructional areas. McAuliffe's class offerings prepare students for both the technical and interpersonal aspects of the work place. The Visual and Performing Arts Standards provide a foundation for our electives curriculum. McAuliffe's elective program incorporates the content standards for music, theater, and the visual arts and instructors teach the five strands of the arts program: artistic perception, creative expression, historical and cultural context, aesthetic valuing, and connections, relationships, and applications. Art, Music, Drama and Keyboarding are offered as an exploratory wheel for sixth grade students. In Art, all sixth grade students are introduced to drawing, watercolor techniques, design and composition, art history, and different styles of art. In seventh and eighth Art, students expand their skills learning the principles of design, realism, cubism/abstraction, artistic heritage, and drawing and painting. Drama, Instrumental Band, Jazz Band, String Orchestra, and Show Choir are offered to students interested in the performing arts. Computers, Technology/Media Arts, and Yearbook are also offered as electives to our seventh and eighth grade students.

Seventh and eighth grade students have the opportunity to take foreign language at McAuliffe. We currently offer Spanish on our campus but students also have the opportunity to take zero period at Los Alamitos High School where they may enroll in Japanese, French, French II, and Spanish II Honors. Currently 25 McAuliffe students attend the high school for foreign language instruction. McAuliffe currently has 79 seventh and eighth grade students enrolled in Spanish. Our foreign language teachers use the *Foreign Language Framework for California Public Schools* as the foundation for their academic program and many use TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling). Over 100 McAuliffe students are enrolled in a foreign language class. Students taking Spanish develop basic skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Vocabulary is enhanced and emphasis is placed on communicating ideas through a variety of expressions. Spanish cultures are also studied focusing on history, geography, traditions, and aspects of daily living through the use of multimedia, class discussions, and readings. In addition, McAuliffe offers an after school Mandarin Chinese class which is supported by our parents through our Education Foundation. Over 20 students are enrolled in this class. These electives as well as our rigorous core classes support students in becoming successful in high school and their future careers.

2. Reading/English:

The ELA department has worked diligently to create an exceptional program. Through the work of grade level and curricular teams, we have identified the specific standards for each grade level, the standards-aligned textbooks to be used for each subject, and the set of assessments that provide the necessary feedback needed to ensure success in learning grade level standards for all students. This year, it is the ELA team's goal to begin to implement the common core state standards in all grade levels. With the same collaborative effort that went into the development of curriculum and common assessments, teachers meet and discuss the results of the district and state assessments in their curricular area at least four times a year.

The ELA department provides a literature rich program that encourages students to become fluent readers, skilled writers, masterful speakers, and critical thinkers. Standards-aligned, framework-based units integrate skills and knowledge across subject-matter lines. The students' schedule is structured to support this integrated program. Each student has a two or three period core class at all grade levels. Core classes include instruction in grammar, written and oral language, reading, literature, vocabulary, spelling and social science. Reading instruction includes analytical skills, monitoring comprehension, questioning strategies, directed reading/thinking activities, vocabulary, developing vocabulary in context, jigsaw procedures, and reading logs. While students read a variety of genres, students read historical fiction to integrate reading and social science. Eighth graders, for example, read *A Tale of Two Cities*, which provides an opportunity to analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the 19th century.

Students who read below grade level are identified early through articulation with feeder schools and other multiple measures. Students are placed in a Reading Intervention class in addition to their Core (reading and

language arts) class. The Reading Intervention class focuses primarily on decoding, comprehension, and fluency. Students who are identified as several grades below grade are recommended for our district's Lindamood-Bell reading program. These students are frequently assessed and once they reach grade level proficiency, they are dismissed from the program(s).

The McAuliffe ELA teachers use the Accelerated Reader program to help increase the amount of students reading in and outside of the school day. Teachers require that students earn points based on the reading level of their book and the successful completion of an Accelerated Reader quiz as part of their reading grade. At the end of the first semester our students had read 4,362 books for a total of 236, 478,954 words! Over 70% of our students averaged at least 85% on the books' quizzes. We are proud of our Eagle readers!

3. Mathematics:

Our mathematics program balances computational and procedural basic skills, conceptual understanding, and problem solving. The sixth grade program develops number sense through decimals, fractions, integers, equations, ratios, proportions, geometry and statistics. Teachers use a variety of instructional methods and strategies that include exploration, flexible grouping within heterogeneous classes, cooperative groups, inquiry lessons, and sustained discourse in problem solving situations. Standards-aligned textbooks along with a technology component are used as part of ongoing lessons. McAuliffe's math teachers are currently using California standards-based curriculum but are in the process of transitioning to the Common Core Standards.

The computer lab is available to all classes. Currently the sixth grade math teachers as well our Math Intervention teachers use the research-based MIND Institute's ST Math (Spatial Temporal Reasoning) software that is a standards-aligned supplement to our textbook. The on-screen manipulatives illustrate mathematical relationships, pose problems, and follow rigorous mathematical rules. Teachers are provided with detailed information of each child's progress. Our Math Intervention teachers also use the Accelerated Math program which assists teachers in individualizing math instruction for every student and also provides detailed reports that help the teacher focus on each student's areas of need. Accelerated Math parent reports are sent home monthly so that parents can monitor their child's progress. Students are grouped heterogeneously in math with the exception of advanced math students and students who qualify for Math Intervention classes. Students who receive high marks in their math class, are proficient or advanced on their district benchmark test, are proficient or advanced on the California Standards Test, have a high score on the California State Fullerton Algebra Readiness Test and with their math teacher's recommendation, are enrolled in an advanced math class the following school year. Advanced math students have the opportunity to take Geometry Honors as an 8th grader after successful completion of Algebra. Students not meeting their grade level math standards are enrolled in a Math Intervention class during the school day, an after school Math Intervention class and/or be recommended for math summer school.

4. Additional Curriculum Area:

The science department at McAuliffe Middle School has been committed to ensuring that all students master content standards by utilizing a variety of instructional strategies, using standards-based curricula, technology to engage students and differentiate instruction, and using multiple measures of assessment to evaluate student progress. For several years now the McAuliffe Science teachers use standards-aligned textbooks that help ensure our students are well informed in the areas of earth, life, and physical science. We prepare our students by aligning our curriculum with the Science Content Standards (1998). This challenging curriculum has been proven successful as evidenced by our California Standards Test science scores. In 2011, 93% of our eighth grades students were considered proficient or advanced in science. Our "hands on" approach in science motivates all students to be actively involved in learning important concepts and deriving meaning through a constructivist approach. The activity-based lessons encourage students to use the scientific processes of observing, comparing, organizing, and applying information. Student scientists use journals to record steps of experiments, prepare charts, graphs, and report their findings. This gives them the opportunity to apply the scientific method. In order to accomplish this,

students must read non-fiction text, extract important information, follow directions during experiments, organize information and write conclusions accurately and clearly. Since science uses “hands on” activities, even the most challenged student can succeed. In sixth grade, students create a colloid mixture to replicate what the Earth’s mantle may look like. Students can be found on the quad creating their colloid and recording in their journal the results of their experiment.

Seventh graders delve into cellular structure and function in the first semester, using microscopes to investigate plant and animal cells, as well as mitotic cycles. Students dissect preserved samples of cow’s eyes, sheep’s hearts, and tree frogs as part of their study of the structure and function of organs and organ systems in living things.

In eighth grade physical science, students investigate acids and bases by experimenting with different acid and base indicators and solutions. Students also explore motion by building roller coasters and identifying potential and kinetic energy, calculating speed, acceleration, and momentum. Mathematics is incorporated in all eighth grade science units. For the advanced learner and science enthusiast, an eighth grade Physical Science Honors class is offered. Currently we have 147 students enrolled in these Honors classes. Enrichment opportunities include participation in our Robotics Club and the Science Olympiad.

5. Instructional Methods:

Teachers employ a variety of instructional methods for maximum student achievement. McAuliffe teachers base their teaching on the *California Standards for the Teaching Profession* (1999) (CSTP). The CSTP are designed to be used by teachers to prompt reflection about student learning and teaching practice; formulate professional goals to improve teaching practice; and guide, monitor and assess the progress of a teacher’s practice toward professional goals and professionally-accepted benchmarks.

In the fall of 2011, our assistant principal, trained the McAuliffe staff in Marzano and Pickering’s model of *The Highly Engaged Classroom*. Instructional strategies were shared and practiced that emphasized an indepth understanding of how to generate high levels of student attention and engagement. The results of what teachers learned were immediate and teachers were able to implement the strategies they learned the very next day. Curricular and grade level teams were allocated time after the workshop to plan and share implementation strategies.

McAuliffe teachers have also been trained in the methods of Data Works’ Explicit Direct Instruction. These methods include curriculum calibration to standards, time on task, depth and breadth of standards, and instructional effectiveness. Explicit Direct Instruction uses the following model: state objectives, review, explanation/modeling/ demonstrating, checking for understanding, and closure. Steps also include monitoring and feedback using cues and prompts, periodic review, and guided practice. Teachers use frequent assessment and evaluation as a critical tool to know whether their students have attained mastery of standards.

Los Alamitos Unified School District expects teachers to follow the CSTP as a foundation for good teaching. New teachers are required to attend a comprehensive beginning teacher training program and are paired with a veteran teacher to help fulfill their teaching credential requirements. The workshops that teacher have attended in the past few years have given them strategies to implement the *Teaching Standards* in their classrooms. Formal evaluations and informal teacher observations, frequent administrator classroom visitations, and discussions with staff ensure that these instructional strategies are being used daily.

6. Professional Development:

McAuliffe’s professional community consists of our principal, assistant principal, counselor, psychologist, teachers, instructional assistants, and other support staff. We use the *California Standards for the Teaching Profession* as a compass for professional development. Our Staff Development Plan reflects the results of student assessments, NCLB requirements, staff needs, current research, recommendations from School Site Council, and our district’s Curriculum Steering Committee. The plan provides jointly established goals for

teachers, administrators, and other school personnel. Goals are designed to improve student achievement, provide content skills/pedagogy, engage and support student learning, establish an environment conducive to learning, and use assessment results to guide instruction.

A variety of professional development has been offered over the past few years. Our Los Alamitos K-8 teachers were trained in the use of Thinking Maps in the classroom. Thinking Maps are used as tools to assist students become successful thinkers, problem solvers and decision makers. Thinking Maps have helped our students organize their learning for better comprehension and understanding. The McAuliffe teachers have used Thinking Maps in a variety of ways and across disciplines. Evidence of Thinking Maps can be found in classrooms around campus. Research has shown that Thinking Maps significantly affect standardized and qualitative measures in student performance which may be one reason McAuliffe's test scores increase every year.

Teachers embraced the information that they learned in Dennis Parker's Strategic Schooling in-service. This staff development day focused on how we could close the achievement gap between minority and majority students. Dennis Parker shared his strategic schooling model with the staff and emphasized the use of data to help us set achievement, student, and content targets for our students. We immediately implemented one of his ideas of having "test chats" with students and helping them set goals for themselves to improve their learning. He taught us that setting and monitoring our targets is one of the most important processes in school reform. We are grateful to Dennis Parker for helping us close our achievement gap! Our school district has been forward thinking in having teachers learn best practices from each other. Therefore, they have supported us by offering staff development following the model of *Restructuring Schools to Become Professional Learning Communities* by Richard DuFour. Austin Buffum, a Professional Learning Communities trainer, worked with the staff to assist us on our road to becoming a PLC. We now spend much more time in grade level and curricular teams to discuss data and strategize ways to increase student learning and achievement. Again, our local and state assessments give evidence that these strategies are working.

For several years now, the staff has been trained in Dr. Sandra Kaplan's USC Model of Differentiation designed for our GATE (Gifted and Talented Education) students. Bob Grubb, a trainer, has assisted our teachers in the implementation of this differentiation model. Based on this model, teachers worked in teams to create standards-based units that incorporate differentiated curriculum for advanced learners. McAuliffe's professional development has assisted us in increasing our Academic Performance Index by 127 points!

As part of this year's staff development, teachers from McAuliffe and our other district middle school will work in curricular teams to review the data from our common benchmark assessments. Teachers will then create/modify curriculum units from where we now have Common Core Standards in the areas of math and English/language arts and map our curriculum for the remainder of the year.

7. School Leadership:

McAuliffe's leadership team consists of the principal, assistant principal, counselor, and psychologist. Under the umbrella of this group, is the leadership team from different curricular departments. These groups work in concert to provide a well articulated vision and academic program for our students. Our principal maintains McAuliffe's vision of "*educating all students intellectually, socially, and physically in a safe environment, to provide citizens with an appreciation and respect for learning and democratic ideals, and to cultivate citizens who will celebrate the diversity of all cultures*" by putting students first. He makes every decision with what is best for all students.

Using the principles of Professional Learning Communities, our principal supports the staff by providing time for teachers to identify explicit, clear goals that address school wide achievement targets, student proficiency, and content goals. Time is taken at the beginning of the year to establish clear instructional goals and expectations for staff. He continually provides regular feedback to the school community,

sharing the results of ongoing and annual assessments, and analyzing how much progress is being made in achieving targeted goals. Education is constantly changing. Our McAuliffe principal leads our school through these academic and instructional changes with ease and understanding. He provides time for teachers to plan and implement the new changes. An example of this is when the sixth grade math department wanted to frequently meet to discuss and plan the use of the next sixth grade math textbook. He provided release time for the sixth grade math teachers to meet, plan units, create common assessments, map curriculum based on district benchmark results, and discuss instructional strategies. In one year, the number of sixth grade math students considered proficient or advanced on the STAR test increased by 9%! Our principal has a common sense approach and can see “the big picture.” He also provides us the resources, time, and tools that allow teachers to do what they do best, teach!