

## **NORTH STAR ACADEMY**

### **PART III - SUMMARY** 12CA1

The mission of North Star is to provide a challenging learning environment that promotes excellence and motivates highly capable students to develop to their fullest potential and become successful and productive citizens. The desire to challenge high achieving students is bold and demanding. The needs of the whole child are effectively met through differentiated instruction, enrichment, time management, organization, and character education.

North Star Academy is worthy of Blue Ribbon status because it challenges students everyday to think critically, to gain standards based knowledge, and to acquire 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in technology and project management. North Star has achieved over 85<sup>th</sup> percentile in the percent of students scoring Advanced or Proficient on state standardized scores in English-Language Arts and Math for multiple years in a row. Our school philosophy is derived from the work of Dr. Joseph Renzulli. Dr. Renzulli is one of the leaders in the field of gifted education. His ideas of compacting curriculum in order to enrich students' academic experiences are incorporated into lesson planning and implementation at North Star Academy.

The Administration facilitates and coordinates the implementation of school programs with the staff. We are a community of learners. At the end of each school year, the staff discusses the goals for the next year. This year, the staff will continue the focus on differentiating instruction through participating in four workshops focused on: assessment, tiering assignments, classroom management, and instructional strategies in content standards. This is an example of how the teachers come together to work on professional development and create long-term goals.

The design and implementation of differentiated instruction was created to analyze how students learn and how teachers can best meet the needs of every student. By analyzing data, teachers can pinpoint who needs help in certain areas. Classroom grouping is designed to be fluid, with groups changing frequently as different concepts are taught.

Assessment information directs our instruction by providing feedback on student progress. Informal and formal assessments help teachers refer students to support services. Assessments allow teachers to target students who need support. Students are supported within the classroom and through a group of people called the Student Study Team. This group is composed of the Principal, the Outreach Specialist, parents, teachers, and the school psychologist. When a student is referred to our Student Study Team, this group determines the best course of action for the child, whether it be an after school homework center, counseling services for social and emotional issues, or support services for disadvantaged students.

North Star is a school of choice serving 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students living within the boundaries of the Redwood City School District. All students entering at 3<sup>rd</sup> grade are new to the school. Students are selected to attend North Star Academy through an application process. The school offers a series of school visitations during the application process in which prospective parents can find out if the school will be a good match for their child's needs. Reading and Math assessments, the SAGES Reasoning test, and report card academic and task commitment information are reviewed. Our school population of 540 students includes 64% White, 22% Latino, 14% Free and Reduced Lunch and 5% English Language Learners.

There are many traditions at North Star Academy that include our community. We work with our parent community to provide many enrichment activities for students. Art in Action takes place in every classroom at North Star Academy. Our performing arts program includes two plays each year. This year, the As You Like It Shakespeare production occurred in the fall with 70 students. In March, Anything Goes Musical will include over 90 students ranging 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The Festival of Words day is another enrichment opportunity for students devoted to literacy. Students attend three workshops taught by teachers or community members on topics surrounding literacy. Students also participate in book fairs, the Environmental Club, sport teams, the Junior Optimist Club, and Student Government during the school day. After school sports teams, a Robotics club, a science club, writing workshops, a chess club, a Mother-Son Dodgeball game, a Father-Daughter dance, a family game night, and dances in middle school add to a variety of additional options for students.

The staff at North Star Academy prides itself on being life long learners themselves. From the analysis of data to make instructional decisions to the staff development opportunities for growth, our teachers are able to reflect on their teaching decisions. The educational opportunities for depth and complexity within the core curriculum and during the end of the day enrichment classes allow students to explore topics of interest. Our school is a successful and unique place for students to learn and thrive.

## **PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS** 12CA1

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

A. North Star Academy continues to move and maintain students to perform at the proficient/advanced level in all standardized assessments. While over 80% of our students are scoring Advanced on the STAR Standardized Test in May, our goal is for 100% of our students to score Advanced.

The breakdown of Performance Levels on the STAR Standardized Test in May are as follows: 150-234 is considered Far Below Basic; 235-299 is considered Below Basic; 300-349 is considered Basic; 350-406 is considered Proficient and 407-600 is considered Advanced.

We use District Benchmark Assessments in September and December as formative assessments. Our goal is that all students will score 70% or higher on these Benchmark Assessments in December. Teachers use this information for planning purposes.

Although not all students enroll in our school scoring Proficient or Advanced, over the past five years, students have demonstrated strong growth. In Language Arts, students scored 89% Advanced and Proficient in 2006. This percentage increased to 98% in 2011. In Math, students scored 99% Advanced and Proficient in 2006 and 98% Advanced and Proficient in 2011.

B. In the most recent year's data, if there is an achievement gap of 10 or more percentage points between the test scores of all students and the test scores of subgroups, please describe what is being done to close this achievement gap.

We do not have a significant subgroup in our English Learner category.

In 2007, our Hispanic subgroup scored at 57% Proficient or Advanced in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in Language Arts. By 4<sup>th</sup> grade, this same subgroup cohort scored 81% Proficient or Advanced in Language Arts. By 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 95% of this cohort group scored Proficient or Advanced in Language Arts.

All students in grades 3-7 scored 98% Proficient or Advanced on the 2011 Math and Language Arts sections of the STAR Standardized test.

From 2007 to 2011 all students in the White subgroup score 100% Proficient in Math in grades 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, except in one year 2011. In 2011, 4<sup>th</sup> graders scored 98.4% Proficient and Advanced in Math.

In our middle school, there are a few significant achievement gaps between subgroups and all students. In 8<sup>th</sup> grade, all students are enrolled in Algebra. In 2011, 68% of our Hispanic population scored Proficient or Advanced in Algebra; overall 86% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at North Star Academy scored Proficient or Advanced in Algebra.

In 7<sup>th</sup> grade Pre-Algebra in 2011, 73% of our Hispanic students scored Proficient or Advance; overall 93% of our students score Proficient or Advanced.

The following interventions and programs are available to meet the needs of students.

North Star Academy provides intervention programs throughout the year to help move students from Far Below Basic/Basic to Proficient and Advanced. Currently there are 11 students school-wide who are not scoring Proficient or Advanced in Language Arts and there are 15 students school-wide who are not scoring Proficient or Advanced in Math, out of a total of 540 students. We are meeting the needs of these students in many ways.

Students who have not performed at the Proficient level attend a math intervention class 2 days a week, which is taught by a credentialed math teacher. This is in addition to their general education math class.

Students in the intervention class are taught grade level standards in small groups. The intervention teacher works on deepening their understanding of math concepts so that they can apply this knowledge in their general education math class.

Grade 7 and 8 students who are not performing at the Proficient level receive math mentoring one day a week for 50 minutes provided by math mentors. These small groups consist of no more than 4 to 5 students so that one-on-one instruction is available on an as need basis. Targeted students in math receive support for factoring, adding/subtracting positive and negative integers, word problem analysis, and fractions. Math mentors work closely with general education math teachers so that any student who is showing signs of struggle can be pulled out for one-on-one tutoring.

For students, at all grade levels, who are not completing their homework, and as a result, not obtaining optimal grades attend an after school homework club. North Star Academy offers three homework clubs one to three days a week. One of the homework clubs is tailored for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders whose first language is not English. The teacher works on teaching them academic language and concepts in both Language Arts and Math to help them become successful in school. The second homework club is for grades 3 to 5 students who are struggling in certain topic areas and the third homework club is for grades 6 to 8 students who are struggling in certain topic areas.

North Star Academy also provides Language Arts Intervention 5 days a week. There are two intervention classes offered for 50 minutes each day. Students are grouped in grades 3 to 5 and grades 6 to 8. Students focus on improving their reading and writing skills by working on foundational skills, such as, parts of speech and/or how to do draft an outline in order to write a 5-paragraph essay.

On a more global level teachers have been trained in specific English Language Development strategies, which are used throughout the school day. Teachers attended Kate Kinsella workshops and included more academic vocabulary instruction within their curriculum. Teachers meet during grade level teams to review STAR and Benchmark results to analyze and to plan on instructional adjustments based on these results. In the recent years, North Star Academy has had an increase of English Language Learners so the English Language Advisory Council (ELAC) was formed to give parents a venue to learn about schoolwide practices and parent education so they can guide their students to success.

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

Instruction at North Star Academy is both data driven and standards driven. Teachers have, over time, become experts in understanding the multitude of pre-assessment, formative, and summative assessment data they have to plan their instructional strategies in order to provide a rigorous curriculum based on student need. North Star teachers use District Benchmark assessments, informal and formal formative, summative and performance based assessments. Progression of our API score from 984 in 2008 to 992 in 2011 stems directly from our concerted effort to use data to plan curriculum.

Although differentiated instruction comes in many forms there are a few steps that are in place in every classroom to ensure proper implementation. The first step is to pre-assess standards prior to planning a lesson or unit. Teachers use informal and formal pre-assessments, ongoing formative assessments and post assessments to determine how students are mastering the state standards. These can be as simple as a question-answer activity, warm up activity, exit card activity or as complex as paragraph writing, a performance, an experiment or a multiple-choice assessment. Once this information is reviewed and analyzed, teachers determine the best course of action to teach the state standards.

Throughout the instruction of a lesson there may be whole group instruction or small group instruction and independent work. Teachers then analyze this information and determine what students need to learn, what they already know and what they need to master. In grades 6-8, teachers work with students to help them understand their individual assessment results and determine what their own next steps to learning. Teachers use this opportunity to help students become reflective learners, utilizing rubrics,

exemplars, or other methods so that students can determine how to improve their own performance.

Students are usually grouped by academic readiness, learning style or interest. Students who need direct instruction are taught directly by the teacher. Students who understand the basic knowledge of a standard work in small groups with a classroom volunteer or the teacher. Students who have mastered a concept are grouped together. These students work on problem solving skills within the current standard on an independent basis that can be derived by student choice. Some project topics chosen by students have been: fashion of the American Revolution time period in history, dissection of frogs and extraction of strawberry DNA in science, the design of a backyard to scale in math, and the creation of original lyrics with music in Language Arts. Groups are fluid and change frequently by standard or groups of standards. We avoid repetition by teaching mastery to students based on the levels they have accomplished on pre-assessment data. We offer project and problem based learning to students to add variety, creativity, and complexity to units.

District Assessments, STAR Renaissance Reading scores, Math tests, pre-assessments and post assessments help teachers plan curriculum based on data. The monitoring and assessment process used to evaluate the results of using compacted curriculum is the frequent use of pre-assessments and ongoing assessments and the analysis of data to plan curriculum based on student readiness, interest or learning ability. This is done during teacher planning time or staff development meetings. At each general staff meeting, teachers are asked to share successes in their classroom. At the beginning of the school year and every three months, teachers review district and state standardized test results to determine group placements or remediation needed. Post assessment results are also used during reflection of a unit or during staff development or evaluation to determine changes needed within a unit of study.

Teachers use data to for planning purposes and conversations with parents and students. Aside from scheduled parent teacher conference appointments, teachers send home weekly emails to give guidance to students and parents about upcoming deadlines and activities. Teachers also meet with struggling students and their families for goal setting meetings. At these meetings, data is reviewed and analyzed. Progressive goals are set for the family and student. Teachers also review class data with classes so students may understand why standards are taught and to show how students are progressing towards standards. In the middle school, teachers give students their pre-assessment data so students can track for themselves their growth over time. Our school offers a Powerschool Parent and Student Portal that allows students and parents to login 24 hours a day to view upcoming assignments, grades and attendance.

All of these forms of communication about data and assessment allow for a strong home to relationship.

### **3. Sharing Lessons Learned:**

North Star Academy teachers and Principal host a workshop each August to train other district teachers on how to use differentiated instruction and enrichment in the core curriculum at other schools. At least one teacher from each grade level (3-5), from each school attends this workshop. The topics that have been covered are: how to include rigor and complexity in lesson planning, how to delve deeper in state standards, how to enrich current units, and how to form essential questions. We have also hosted workshops to other district teachers (grades 3-5) on how to plan project and problem based learning units. These units have been shared and duplicated in binders that have been distributed to other district schools.

We have built a library of approximately one hundred books, workbooks, curricula and other Differentiated Instruction materials for our faculty's use. These books are also shared with other schools in helping them differentiate instruction.

The Principal is part of a Professional Learning Community with other Principals. This groups shares best practices and discusses strategies on how to better instruction for teachers. Topics have included enriching core curriculum, using technology to engage student learning, and Explicit Direct Instruction

for our English Learner population.

The Principal has presented information about using pre-assessment data to drive instruction to other Principals at District meetings. This collaborative effort has allowed Principals to understand how to help their teachers differentiate instruction and form small groups for tiered assignments.

#### **4. Engaging Families and Communities:**

North Star Academy engages families and communities in a variety of ways. We find that inviting parents and community members into our school allows students to understand the home-school connection and how curriculum relates to the outside world.

We invite families into the classroom to help with small groups, field trips and general classroom interaction with students. Parents and community members are often guest speakers. Parents spend numerous hours weekly in the classrooms volunteering for Art in Action, Marcy Cook Math, or as tutors. The Parent Club and Site Council are very active and run many of the school wide events such as Festival of Words (a day devoted to literacy).

We have also invited parents and community members to become math mentors to our students. Each adult will meet with a small group of students once a week to support the students on math skills in grades 6-8.

The Site Council has taken an active role in helping support technology at the site, developing better environmentally friendly practices at the school, participation in the SOS project, development of community service projects, efforts to increase understanding of North Star in the greater school community and support of the enrichment program as well as many other initiatives.

Our English Learner parents feel a part of the school community as well. They volunteer at our auctions, sell snacks at our school performances, and even have a liaison that attends the Parent Club meetings. Our office staff sends out many emails to parents with important reminders so we also need to make sure all families have email accounts and have access to a school computer to check emails regularly.

Our email communication system is crucial to providing regular and consistent email to families. The school sends out a weekly Monday email and Principal's newsletter to communicate to families. Each week, teachers send out an email explaining upcoming projects or assignments. We also have a "Parent Portal" which allows families to view grades and assignments online.

## **PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION** 12CA1

### **1. Curriculum:**

All teachers at North Star Academy teach the California State Standards through the use of the state adopted curriculum. In many classes, students are responsible for checking off the state standards as they master them. This allows students to be responsible for their learning.

In Reading/Language Arts we use a variety of methods to teach reading and writing. We have a standards based literature circle program that is integrated with social studies. We also use a differentiated independent reading program that is novel based and has 40 novels to choose from. It includes comprehension questions which the children read and answer critical thinking questions. We use a variety of methods for teaching language standards including language and vocabulary warm ups and many writing projects where we use the whole writing process. This allows the teacher to work in a small group with those students struggling to complete the three paragraphs while others are expanding the essay to five paragraphs.

In Math, the state adopted curriculum is used everyday in class. Teachers also supplement the math curriculum by using other research-based curriculum such as Marcy Cook Math. Students demonstrate their learning through worksheets, projects, and demonstrations.

In Social Studies, students use the state adopted curriculum which weaves in project based learning. Teachers use problem based learning and simulations to engage students in understanding the historical perspective of cultures and people.

The Science curriculum uses FOSS curriculum that gives students a hands on experience in science. The use of science experiments that are teacher demonstrated or student created are common. We have a full service science lab that teachers rotate through to teach lessons. Our middle school students also use dissection to learn the standards.

We have a strong visual and performing arts program. Teachers use performance throughout the subject matters. Teachers also direct a Shakespeare play in the Fall and a Winter Musical. We offer students a comprehensive Physical Education program taught by a teacher credentialed in Physical Education. Students participate in PE twice to four times per week depending on their grade level. The PE teacher teaches all state standards in PE.

The technology standards are woven within the core curriculum of Language Arts, Social Studies and Science. Students in middle school learn to keyboard and take a separate keyboarding class. We have a separate computer lab and five student computers in each classroom. We also teach a multimedia enrichment class each trimester.

The foreign language class offered at North Star is Spanish. Students in grades 4 and 5 learn Spanish for one hour one day a week. Students in grades 6-8 learn Spanish for one hour twice a week. The Spanish class is taught by a credentialed teacher. She uses textbooks that incorporates foreign language standards in her classroom.

Our middle school teachers weave project planning, critical thinking, research skills and technology skills into their lesson plans. These skills help students prepare for high school and beyond. Our goal is for North Star students to love learning and to be great thinkers.

## **2. Reading/English:**

Our school uses differentiated instruction techniques in teaching the state adopted curriculum, Houghton Mifflin. Students are challenged by reading texts at their grade level or higher. The use of spelling lists, writing assignments, and novels are based on readiness levels. Underperforming students or students at basic receive individual prescriptive help. The district assessments are given to students twice a year and are broken down by standard in order to determine, whole group needs as well as individual progress. This helps teachers plan how to support and challenge students.

We use many of the grade level reading, literature, and some of the writing standards in the context of a standards based yearlong literature circle unit. It is based largely on works, from the historical fiction genre. Student reading levels as well as student book preference differentiates instruction. Students read the selections and write reflections and writing pieces individually, which is usually followed by a cooperative learning component. The assignments include, vocabulary, comprehension, written response, summary, authors theme, cause and effect and many more. The year begins by practice with sets of short stories and by the first of the year we move to novels. A novel or set of stories takes place in a three-to four-week period. In addition, we teach approximately 50-75% of the stories in the Houghton Mifflin reading series. In addition, we have a nightly reading program where students track the number of hours they read each week and month and complete a book report each trimester.

Our students write several major writing pieces in addition to the short pieces that are done regularly, to accompany the reading and history series. The major writing pieces include one of each of the following: A Personal Narrative (autobiographical incident) in the fall, a research based multi paragraph expository piece, a Historical fiction in the spring, a Personal Memoir in the late spring, and end the year with poetry. We also include research reports. We use six traits assessments.

We use many formative and summative assessments. We give spelling pre and posttest on the weeks in which we are teaching a spelling unit. We give vocabulary and language quizzes to test specific skills. We use rubrics, portfolios, group work and presentations as summative assessments. We pretest units from Houghton Mifflin to determine what needs to be covered from the Houghton Mifflin materials.

### **3. Mathematics:**

In Math, teachers administer pre-assessments to students before standards are taught to gain an understanding of what core knowledge the students have already mastered. Based on the knowledge of the class, the teacher designs units or lessons that will meet the needs of each student. Differentiation may take the form of different groupings in classrooms, different assignments for specific groups of students or lessons designed to meet varying degrees of understanding. In addition to the individual assessments that teachers use to pre-assess by standard and unit, each child is given district benchmark assessments twice a year. Scores are reported to teachers and used to assess individual student progress as well as overall program effectiveness.

A comprehensive web-based data analysis system was recently purchased for teachers to analyze data. Students take the district math standards assessments twice during the year. The results of these assessments are used by the teachers to gauge student progress towards state standards. Teachers analyze these assessments and meet with administration as well as grade level teams to discuss results. In grade level meetings, teachers discuss how to support students or how to challenge students. Aside from using the state-adopted curriculum, teachers design project based and problem based units to meet the needs of all levels in the classroom. We also use Marcy Cook Math to challenge students with critical thinking skills in math. Teachers have designed a “show thinking” form that encourages students to show their work.

For struggling students, we have math mentors that meet with students once a week to support standards. We also have a math intervention class after school. Students also meet with teachers in small groups during the school day.

### **4. Additional Curriculum Area:**

The Social Studies curriculum at North Star is taught in a project or problem based manner. Including enrichment opportunities challenge students to study the curriculum with depth and complexity. In all grade levels, Language Arts standards are interwoven within Social Studies state content standards. In 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, the student study the Ohlone tribe, build a village to understand community and write a speech and essay about Ohlone life. In 4<sup>th</sup> grade, students study American Indians, attend local field trips to the Gold Country to learn about how people lived and worked during this time period, and use performing arts skills to re-enact plays and study the times. In 5<sup>th</sup> grade, students learn about Colonial life. They create a state report that studies one of the fifty states in depth. This culminating research project includes a presentation of the state and a research report.

The middle school state adopted curriculum includes project based learning in its design. In 6<sup>th</sup> grade, students participate in Greco-Roman and Egypt theme days. Students research and dress up as an important figure in this time period, build pyramids, recite poetry, and participate in games of the day. They also cook food from the time period and enjoy a feast at lunch time. In 7<sup>th</sup> grade, students participate in a Renaissance Day where they research a person and answer an essential question, “Does my person exemplify a Renaissance person and why?”. After writing a research report and answering this question, students participate in a Renaissance theme day. Students learn The Pavan dance, eat food from the Renaissance time period cuisine, and listen to a presentation from each student about the person they researched. Other project based work is completed over the course of the year in all topics related to the curriculum. In 8<sup>th</sup> grade, students attend many local field trips in the study of immigration. They also participate in a re-enactment of the Constitutional Convention of 1787. Students “become” a delegate from the Convention and learn about their state’s concerns in 1787. Then, students create their own

Constitution and compare it to the actual United States Constitution.

These project and problem based learning opportunities help students use research, art, performing arts and problem solving skills to understand Social Studies curriculum.

### **5. Instructional Methods:**

Although Differentiated Instruction comes in many forms, there are a few steps that are in place in every classroom to ensure proper implementation. The first step is to pre-assess standards prior to planning a lesson or unit. Teachers use informal and formal pre-assessments, ongoing formative assessments, and post assessments to determine how students are mastering the state standards. Teachers then analyze this information, via a web based data analysis system, and determine what students need to learn, what they already know, and what they need to master. Teachers use this information for planning purposes and conversations with parents and students.

Once this information is reviewed and analyzed, teachers determine the best course of action to teach the state standards. This may look like whole group instruction or small group instruction and independent work. In upper grade levels, teachers work with students to help them understand their individual assessment results and to determine what are their own next steps to learning. Teachers use this opportunity to help students become reflective learners by utilizing rubrics so that students can determine how to improve their own performance.

Students are usually grouped by academic readiness, learning style, or interest. Students who need direct instruction are taught directly by the teacher. Students who understand the basic knowledge of a standard work in small groups with a classroom volunteer or the teacher. Students who have mastered a concept are grouped together. These students work on problem solving skills within the current standard on an independent basis that can be derived by student choice. Some project topics chosen by students have been: fashion of the American Revolution time period in history, dissection of frogs and extraction of strawberry DNA in science, the design of a backyard to scale in math, and the creation of original lyrics with music in Language Arts. We avoid repetition by teaching mastery to students based on the levels they have accomplished on pre-assessment data. We offer project and problem-based learning to students to add variety, creativity, and complexity to units.

Teachers use technology in the classroom to communicate standards via the document camera, projector and computer. Students are encouraged to produce end products using software such as Excel, Imovie, PowerPoint and other web based resources.

### **6. Professional Development:**

North Star Academy offers a broad and highly supportive means of staff development to meet the high expectations of implementation of Differentiated Instruction and Compacted Curriculum. The Administration believes that well-trained teachers will, in turn, provide meaningful and comprehensive lessons. Instructional leadership is advocated and discussed frequently. In order for teachers to continue to work on Differentiated Instruction, the school provides a minimum day each week to allow for teacher meetings. One afternoon per month is used for grade level meetings. If gaps in student progress are found, teachers have conversations to determine how to adjust instruction to bridge the gaps. This can result in instructional strategies, resources, or lesson planning. Teachers work together to build a foundation of measurement for students. During our staff development meetings once a month, the staff brainstorms instructional strategies, the use of pre-assessments, classroom management techniques, proper ways to communicate results to families, and obstacles teachers need to address. Last year we were “differentiating our staff development” by holding a variety of staff development workshops that teachers choose to attend so they may achieve their own professional goals of staff development using Differentiated Instruction. These topics include: Assessments, Tiering Assignments, Classroom Management in a Differentiated Classroom, Differentiated Instruction Strategies in Language Arts, Differentiated Instruction Strategies in Math, and Differentiated Instruction Strategies in Science. Teachers from all over the district are invited to attend these workshops as well.



This school year, teachers are participating in Vertical Teaming. Vertical Teaming allows teachers across the grade levels to meet and discuss trends and examine standards that students excel and struggle with learning. Teachers also discussed enrichment opportunities for students and ways teachers incorporate critical thinking activities.

These professional development opportunities impact student achievement by allowing teachers to scrutinize the curriculum they are delivering, changing instruction based on data and understanding what students have mastered when they come to school in August.

### **7. School Leadership:**

The Administration at North Star Academy which includes the Principal and Vice Principal, firmly believe in the development of sound instruction and staff development of teachers. As the Instructional Leader, the Principal's main focus is to ensure that students are being challenged in a positive environment. The Principal also ensures that instruction is targeted and purposeful.

The Administration facilitates and coordinates the implementation of school programs with the staff. We are a community of learners. At the end of each school year, the staff discusses the goals for the next year. Last year, the staff will continue the focus on differentiating instruction through participating in four workshops focused on: assessment, tiering assignments, classroom management, and instructional strategies in content standards. This is an example of how the teachers come together to work on professional development and create long-term goals. By allowing the staff to create programs with direction from the Administration, our school incorporates a well-defined comprehensive staff development plan. With this approach, the Administration can receive direct feedback from the staff and together we can make changes as needed.

The Administration meets with teachers to monitor success in the classroom and to help teachers achieve their own professional goals. Data from pre-assessments and post-assessments are reviewed and analyzed. Based on the data, planning decisions are made and progress is tracked.

The Administration will teach classes so teachers may meet and observe each other and discuss lessons. The schedule has been arranged so that the middle school teachers meet every month to discuss grade level needs or subject matter concerns or integration. Workshops, trainings, and conferences are well attended by North Star staff. Over the past few years, teachers have attended conferences on Gifted Education, Differentiated Instruction, project based learning workshops, Writing workshops, and Science and Math Enrichment to name a few. Through the ongoing collaboration, staff development, frequent analysis of data, and a philosophy that encourages high expectations for gifted and high achieving students, we are continuously improving student achievement by challenging students in all content areas. Funding is also earmarked for ongoing staff development in the form of conferences, stipends for outside of instruction time, and substitute pay.