



**Durham Public Schools**

**Middle School Reform Plan**

**June 2005**

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## **The Context and History of the Middle School Reform Initiative**

### **Conditions Prompting Reform**

During the 2003-04 school year, Superintendent Ann Denlinger and members of the DPS senior staff met with middle school principals on several occasions to discuss the status of middle school performance. Although there had been some improvements in state ABCs test scores over the past few years, achievement at the middle schools had been relatively flat on the required End-of-Grade tests, and suspension rates were unacceptably high. In 2003-04, Durham Public Schools did not meet No Child Left Behind (NCLB) adequate yearly progress (AYP) in grades 6-8. No DPS middle school met expected growth for 2003-04 as set by the State Board of Education.

In the summer of 2004, administrators and principals decided that it was time for a public initiative modeled after the district's high school reform process that had begun in April 2004. They decided to convene a committee of eight representatives from each middle school: the principal, a counselor, five teachers, and one parent. Beginning in September, they would meet once a month for an entire day to study data, to identify best practices, and to reach agreement on a plan for Durham's middle schools.

Durham Public Schools' middle school reform initiative has unfolded at a time when both state and national organizations are focusing attention on improving middle school education. Key examples of state and national interest in improving the effectiveness of middle schools include:

1. In 2000, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development published *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The *Turning Points* recommendations and design elements for effective middle schools influenced all subsequent middle school reform efforts.
2. In 2001, the National Middle School Association published *This We Believe . . . And Now We Must Act*, which synthesized the research on middle level education, and presented a list of twelve characteristics of developmentally responsive middle schools.
3. In 2002, the NC State Superintendent of Public Instruction appointed a task force to study middle school education in North Carolina and make recommendations to improve middle schools. The report, *Last Best Chance 2004: Educating Young Adolescents in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, was published in September 2004. The report includes 29 recommendations in 5 areas: Curriculum and Instruction, Diversity, Educator Preparation, Organization and Culture, and Partnerships.
4. Also in 2002, North Carolina was one of three states to pioneer the *Schools to Watch* program of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform. The publication of the *Schools to Watch* criteria provided a national model for excellence against

which middle schools could assess their effectiveness. This report lists 36 criteria in four areas: Academic Excellence, Responsiveness to Students' Needs, Social Equity, and Organizational Structures and Processes. Since 2003, fourteen North Carolina middle schools have received the *Schools to Watch* designation.

DPS' Middle School Reform Initiative studied the recommendations of each of these national and state reports as a background to its work. Following the lead of the district's high school reform initiative, the middle school reform group also adopted the slogan "Rigor-Relevance-Relationships," adding the fourth R: "Results!"

### **The Purpose of the Middle School Reform Initiative**

Prior to the first meeting of the Middle School Reform Committee in September 2004, DPS senior staff developed a charge for the group:

"After analyzing data and investigating research-based practices, the committee will create a district plan for middle school reform. Each school committee will also develop an action plan with specific goals."

This statement of the initiative's purpose signaled that the work of the committee would happen at two levels simultaneously: at both the district level (what we would all agree to do as a district) and at the individual school level (how each school would address its own particular needs within the context of the district's overall plan).

### **Durham Public Schools' Vision for Middle School Students**

The Vision Statement of Durham Public Schools reads: "Durham Public Schools will ensure that students achieve at highest potential regardless of race, gender or social-economic status. Each student will make continuous progress and will be at or above grade level." At the middle school level, the implications of this statement are that all students will leave eighth grade prepared to be successful in high school.

As the work of the Middle School Reform Committee progressed, it became clear that the best way to express this vision in measurable terms was to align the initiative with the goals already set by the federal NCLB goals, the state's ABCs goals, and the district's goal of closing the achievement gap in reading and mathematics by 2007, thus align middle school reform with ambitious local, state, and national goals.

### **The Process of the Middle School Reform Committee's Work**

The committee scheduled meetings for one whole day a month from September 2004 to May 2005. To accomplish the purpose in this series of meetings, administrators employed the following strategies:

- *Use of a neutral facilitator.* Dr. Alan Teasley, Executive Director for Grants Administration and one of five Facilitative Leadership master trainers in North Carolina, agreed to facilitate

each meeting. This allowed central administrators (Superintendent, associate and assistant superintendents, and executive directors) to participate in discussions as equal members of the task force.

- *Agenda designed to produce outcomes.* Each agenda listed the desired outcomes for the meeting. Whenever possible, agenda items called for active participation of all members and asked school teams or ad hoc groups to produce products (for example, lists of agreed-upon priorities), which were then incorporated in the minutes.
- *Ground rules.* At the first meeting, the committee agreed to be governed by a set of ground rules, including using consensus as the preferred method of decision making. In addition to the usual ground rules of speaking one at a time and honoring time limits, the committee agreed to a few that truly spoke to their commitment to reforming middle schools: “Keep the needs of students in the forefront;” “No looking backward to the past, except to learn from it;” and “Consider the glass half-full rather than half-empty.”
- *Minutes.* At each meeting, a secretary from central services took notes on a laptop computer. After each meeting, minutes were sent out by email for review, approved at the subsequent meeting, and posted on the district’s web site.
- *Continuous improvement of the process.* Each meeting ended with an evaluation of the meeting using the Plus/Delta tool (“What worked? What could make it better next time?”)
- *A concurrent Middle School Principals’ Academy.* Starting in October, Dr. Denlinger, Dr. Harris, Dr. Mozingo, and Mr. Sneed met monthly with middle school principals to discuss critical issues in curriculum and instruction.

### **Progress (September 2004 – May 2005)**

The Middle School Reform Initiative was designed to follow three general phases:

- Data Collection and Analysis—understanding exactly where we were as a district in terms of student achievement, suspensions, attendance, and customer satisfaction.
- Determining Best Practices—learning from national and state models of middle school reform such as *Turning Points 2000*, *Last Best Chance 2004*, *This We Believe ...And Now We Must Act*, and *Schools to Watch*.
- Designing Strategies for Local Middle School Reform—agreeing on strategies to implement in the 2005-06 school year and beyond.

#### Data Collection and Analysis

Early on, administrators decided to present each school’s data to the entire middle school reform committee. All data would be shared publicly, confronted directly, and analyzed without assigning blame. The intention was to understand exactly where each school stood in terms of student performance data.

During the committee meetings of September and October, Dr. David Aman, DPS Director of Assessment and Accountability, and David Sneed, Executive Director for Middle Schools, presented the committee with data and provided questions for each school team to answer about their school’s data. At the end of each of the data analysis sessions, committee members were asked to identify additional data they needed. If such data was available, Dr.

Aman presented it at the following meeting. By the end of this phase of the initiative, school teams had analyzed the following data:

- Attendance
- End-of Grade Test Results
- NC Writing Test Results
- NC Computer Skills Test Results
- End-of-Course Test Results
- ABCs Status over last four years
- Suspensions and Dropouts
- No Child Left Behind Outcomes
- Numbers of over-age students
- NC Report Card (including teacher preparation and turnover data in addition to student test results)
- DPS Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

#### Determining Best Practices

At the October meeting, each committee member received a copy of *Last Best Chance 2004* and the *Schools to Watch* criteria (see above). Each member read these documents in preparation for a discussion at the November meeting. During that meeting each school team rated each of the 29 recommendations in *Last Best Chance 2004* on a scale of 1 to 5 in terms of the importance of the recommendation and reached consensus on its current implementation at their school. Each team posted its results on a large display. Central services staff computed average ratings for each of the recommendations and brought these figures back to the group in December to set priorities for reform. Also at the November meeting, the team divided into groups of four to investigate and discuss the *Schools to Watch* criteria as they have been employed at four middle schools around the country. When the large group reassembled, they discussed the implications of these criteria for our work in Durham.

In December each committee member received a copy of *This We Believe ... And Now We Must Act*. Each school agreed to take one or two of the 13 chapters and present them at the January meeting. Each team prepared a summary of that section and designed an activity so that each participant would actively engage in discussion of the issues. These activities included audio-visual presentations, role-playing, and games.

In addition to the work with the three reports, the committee heard presentations from a variety of speakers during the course of their work. The following chart summarizes these sources of reform strategies.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Speaker/Organization</b>	<b>Topic</b>
November 16, 2004	Dr. Alan Teasley Durham Public Schools	An Overview of Robert Marzano's <i>What Works in Schools</i>
November 16, 2004	Whole Committee Seminar	<i>Last Best Chance 2004</i> and <i>Schools to Watch</i> criteria
December 14, 2004	Dr. John Harrison Executive Director NC Middle School Association	Update on <i>Last Best Chance 2004</i> and <i>North Carolina Schools to Watch</i> criteria
January 18, 2005	Brian Whitehead The Flippen Group	<i>Capturing Kids' Hearts</i> Framework for School Personalization
January 18, 2005	School Team Presentations	<i>This We Believe ... And Now We Must Act</i>
February 1, 2005 (Joint meeting with High School Reform Committee)	Dr. Phil Schlechty Center for Leadership and School Reform	Secondary School Reform Across the Nation
March 3, 2005	Dr. Michael Rettig James Madison University	Options for the Middle School Schedule
March 3, 2005	Dr. Terri Mazingo, Nancy Hester, and Ron Wahlen Durham Public Schools	Overview of Curriculum Alignment Using Riverdeep Software

### Designing Strategies for Local Middle School Reform

During the meetings in the spring semester of 2005, the committee reached agreement on five focus areas for middle school reform in Durham Public Schools and on the key district-wide strategies for the 2005-06 school year and beyond. Although school teams took some time at each meeting to discuss implications of data and presentations for their particular school's situation, work on the individual school plans began in earnest in April 2005. Each school team then decided on the strategies they would employ at their school to align with the goals and strategies of the district plan.

### **Measurable Goals of the Middle School Reform Initiative**

1. By 2009, 95% of students will exit eighth grade on grade level in reading, mathematics and science (as measured by NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress standard).
2. By 2007, the achievement gap will be eliminated in reading and mathematics in grades 6-8 (District's "Closing the Gap" goal).
3. Each year, all middle schools will meet or exceed their growth targets set by the State Board of Education and measured by North Carolina End-of-Grade, End-of-Course, and Computer Skills tests.

Schools could also set additional goals, which are included in their individual school plans.

## **Focus Areas for District-Wide Middle School Reform**

1. Increase the **academic success** of middle school students, as measured by state assessments.
2. Ensure that schools develop practices that are **responsive to student needs**.
3. Ensure that all students have access to high quality programs and resources, and that middle schools are **socially equitable, democratic, and fair**.
4. Reorganize the **structure, calendar, schedule, and governance** of the school to provide a more personalized environment and to increase academic success.
5. **Involve parents, community agencies, and businesses** to support middle school success.

## **District-Wide Strategies for Middle School Reform**

For each of the areas above, the Middle School Reform Committee reached consensus on specific district-wide strategies. In some cases, these were activities that would be directed by central office administrators; in other cases, these were activities that each school would take. For each of the five areas, school teams also designed specific strategies that would support the implementation of the district strategies.

The following section contains the district-wide strategies; each school's specific strategies are contained in their individual school plans, which follow the district plan.

### **1. Academic Excellence:**

*District Focus:* Increase the academic success of middle school students, as measured by state assessments. This focus aligns with *North Carolina Schools to Watch* criteria in Academic Excellence: "High performing schools with middle grades are academically excellent. They challenge all students to use their minds well."

- A. By May 2006, the district will create documents that fully align all DPS middle school courses with the NC Standard Course of Study: alignment guides, unit plans, sample lesson plans, exemplars of high quality student work, a variety of assessment tools, and links to textbook and other resources. Unit and lesson plans will reflect "best practice" instructional strategies as well as engaging curriculum. The district will provide this information to all middle school teachers online via Riverdeep software.
- B. In the 2006-07 school year, the district will begin to develop—as a resource for teachers—a bank of interdisciplinary units that provide middle school students with deep understanding of important concepts.
- C. The district will maintain middle school staffing ratios at the 2004-05 levels, which will provide teachers time to plan collaboratively with their colleagues.

- D. The district will provide ongoing staff development to middle school teachers in the use of research-based, highly effective instructional strategies.
- E. The district will continue to support and focus resources on pre-college programs at the middle school level.
- F. The district will support and focus resources on computer technology to increase students' proficiency as measured by the NC Computer Skills Test.

## **2. Responsiveness to Student Needs**

*District Focus:* Ensure that schools develop practices that are responsive to student needs. This focus aligns with North Carolina Schools to Watch criteria in Responsiveness to Students' Needs: "High performing schools with middle grades are sensitive to the unique developmental challenges of early adolescence."

- A. Each middle school will create small learning communities within the school, with students spending the majority of the instructional day on a team of approximately 50-100 students and 2-4 teachers.
- B. The district will ensure that each middle school has a comprehensive counseling and guidance team and a support services team to include social workers, nurses, special educators, translators, and others as needed.
- C. By June 2006, the district will articulate a K-12 plan to improve students' transition from elementary to middle schools and middle schools to high schools.
- D. Beginning in July 2005 and continuing through June 2008, the district will provide all middle school teachers with *Capturing Kids' Hearts* training.
- E. By June 2006, the district will provide training to school teams such that each school may offer *Teen Leadership* as an elective in the 2006-07 school year.
- F. By July 2005, the district will develop a plan to improve services for all special populations at the middle grades level.

## **3. Social and Instructional Equity**

*District Focus:* Ensure that all students have access to high quality programs and resources, and that middle schools are socially equitable, democratic, and fair. This focus aligns with North Carolina Schools to Watch criteria in Social Equity: "High performing schools with middle grades are socially equitable, democratic, and fair. They provide every student with high quality teachers, resources, learning opportunities, and supports. They keep positive options open to all students."

- A. Human Resource Services will work with middle school principals to recruit and hire teachers who meet NCLB’s “highly qualified” standards to ensure that all students have high quality learning opportunities.
- B. The district will provide new teachers with increased support, including a trained mentor and orientation to the Riverdeep curriculum materials.
- C. The district and each middle school will offer professional development that addresses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions teachers need to support the learning of all students.
- D. The district will ensure that the curriculum and instructional materials in the Riverdeep database incorporate best practices in addressing cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity.
- E. The district will provide middle schools with comprehensive and user-friendly reports of student performance data—disaggregated by race, socio-economic status, and other relevant factors—to enable schools to evaluate and plan instruction.
- F. Each middle school will ensure that all students have equal access to rigorous, accelerated, and enriched academic experiences.

#### **4. Organization, Structure, and School Governance**

*District Focus:* Reorganize the structure, calendar, schedule, and governance of the school to provide a more personalized environment and increase academic success. This focus aligns with North Carolina Schools to Watch criteria in Organizational Structures and Processes: “High performing schools with middle grades are learning organizations that establish norms, structures, and organizational arrangements to support and sustain their trajectory toward excellence.”

- A. In August 2005, each non-magnet middle school will implement a schedule with the following requirements:
  - 1. Each core academic course (language arts, math, science, and social studies) meets for 70 minutes each day.
  - 2. There is a 90 minute block each day for electives. These classes may be offered 45 minutes per day or 90 minutes in an A/B day schedule.
- B. Each middle school will assign students to a team of teachers, who are expected to meet together regularly to plan instruction, discuss the progress of individual students, and communicate as necessary with parents.
- C. In 2005-06, the district will continue quarterly meetings of the Middle School Reform Committee to provide for ongoing monitoring of progress and further development of reform strategies. District administration will continue to expect committee members to serve as a communication link to each school’s site-based decision-making committee and other parent groups.

## 5. Parent and Community Involvement

*District Focus:* Involve parents, community agencies, and businesses to support middle school success. This focus aligns with Last Best Chance 2004 recommendations in Partnerships: “Involvement by parents, family, and the community has had a profound impact on student success.”

- A. The district will continue to support Connect-ED and a Middle School Reform web site as tools for parent communication and public awareness. The district will also use Cable Channel 4 and other media to promote public awareness of middle school issues.
- B. The district will make an annual report to the Board of Education on the progress of middle school reform in the district.
- C. Each middle school will articulate in its School Improvement Plan specific strategies for communicating with parents.
- D. Each middle school will provide programs for parents that educate them on how children learn, the nature of young adolescents, and specific instructional program opportunities.
- E. The district will coordinate an effort, through community partnerships, to provide access to technology to parents and to educate them on how to obtain information from local schools.

### **Accomplishments to Date of the Middle School Reform Initiative**

This document is a plan for the future; however, it is important to note that the committee’s work over the past year has already served as a catalyst for change in Durham’s middle schools and a focus for central office support activities. The following list provides a sample of activities prompted by the Middle School Reform Initiative.

- Created an awareness of how to use data more effectively to improve instruction in middle schools.
- Began a comprehensive review of the middle school curriculum.
- Provided middle school schedule development training with national experts.
- Adopted a district-wide schedule increasing instructional time in four core areas to 70 minutes per day per course (an increase of over 50% in time available to teach).
- Began to create alignment guides for all core courses consistent with 70-minute classes.
- Embarked upon a three-year plan to train all middle school teachers in *Capturing Kids’ Hearts*.
- Developed a culture of collaboration among the middle school principals and members of the reform committee.

## **The Future of Middle School Reform in Durham Public Schools**

The Middle School Reform Committee realizes that its work has reached an important milestone, and that their work has really just begun. The work of the committee has resulted in a sense of urgency about the need to improve our middle schools. Additionally, the committee realizes that middle school reform is not an event, but rather a long term process that will require ongoing commitment, data analysis, planning, assessment, and policy revision. For this reason, the committee will continue its work into future years, continually finding ways to improve the success of our middle school students.

### **Individual Middle School Plans Follow**

**Brogden Middle School: Strategies for 2005-06**

**Goals**

The strategies of our individual school plan are aligned with the following district-wide goals for middle school reform:

1. By 2009, 95% of students will exit eighth grade on grade level in reading, mathematics and science (as measured by NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress standard).
2. By 2007, the achievement gap will be eliminated in reading and mathematics in grades 6-8 (District's "Closing the Gap" goal)
3. Each year, all middle schools will meet or exceed their growth targets set by the State Board of Education and measured by North Carolina End-of-Grade, End-of-Course, and Computer Skills tests.

**1. Academic Excellence:**

*District Focus:* Increase the academic success of middle school students, as measured by state assessments.

**Brogden Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Assess students at the end of seventh grade to determine level of computer competency. Provide remediation and additional learning opportunities for students to master computer skills in which they are deficient.
- B. During school year 2005–2006, each team or grade level will design and implement a minimum of one (1) interdisciplinary unit per semester.
- C. Teachers will design rigorous, relevant lessons, aligned with state standards, for all students and provide students with exemplars of high quality work that meets performance standards; use a variety of methods to assess student performance.
- D. Provide staff development in effective instructional strategies.

## **2. Responsiveness to Student Needs**

*District Focus:* Insure that schools develop practices that are responsive to student needs.

### **Brogden Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Use EOG student data to determine instructional interventions for struggling students and an enrichment plan for high achieving students.
- B. Increase the involvement of families of students to improve student learning.
- C. By August 2006 all teachers will have initial training in Riverdeep and begin incorporating these instructional materials into their lesson planning.
- D. Teachers will design engaging lessons that address real world problems and help students make connections across disciplines.

## **3. Social and Instructional Equity**

*District Focus:* Insure that all students have access to high quality programs and resources, and that middle schools are socially equitable, democratic, and fair.

### **Brogden Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. By August 2006, all teachers will incorporate materials found in Riverdeep and "Working on the Work" teaching strategies to promote instructional equity.
- B. Use the students' previous performance data to determine the instructional interventions for struggling students.
- C. Incorporate positive behavior strategies to encourage appropriate school behavior.

## **4. Organization, Structure, and School Governance**

*District Focus:* Reorganize the structure, calendar, schedule, and governance of the school to provide a more personalized environment and increase academic success.

### **Brogden Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Provide each academic team with a common planning time of 90 minutes per day. Team members will meet weekly to plan and discuss student progress. Ensure that grade levels meet together weekly.
- B. Open the 2005-2006 school year with a schedule that includes the following criteria:

- a. Each academic course will meet for 70 minutes daily.
- b. There is a 90 minute block each day for electives. Elective periods can be divided into two 45 minute periods daily or 90 minutes on A/B day schedule.

## **5. Parent and Community Involvement**

District Focus: Involve parents, community agencies, and businesses to support middle school success.

### **Brogden Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Each team will distribute a monthly newsletter including important dates and curriculum information.
- B. Teachers will post homework assignment on homework hotline and Wired for Learning Website.
- C. Host curriculum events, offering both evening and day options to give access to more parents.

<b>Carrington Middle School: Strategies for 2005-06</b>
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## **Goals**

The strategies of our individual school plan are aligned with the following district-wide goals for middle school reform:

1. By 2009, 95% of students will exit eighth grade on grade level in reading, mathematics and science (as measured by NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress standard).
2. By 2007, the achievement gap will be eliminated in reading and mathematics in grades 6-8 (District's "Closing the Gap" goal).
3. Each year, all middle schools will meet or exceed their growth targets set by the State Board of Education and measured by North Carolina End-of-Grade, End-of-Course, and Computer Skills tests.

In addition, Carrington has adopted the following goals:

1. Each year, the student attendance rate will exceed 96%.
2. Each year, the suspension rate will be reduced by 10% for Out-of-School Suspension and total number of students suspended.

<b>2. Academic Excellence</b>
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*District Focus:* Increase the academic success of middle school students, as measured by state assessments.

### **Carrington Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. All students will have had a keyboarding class by the end of their 7<sup>th</sup> grade year.
- B. Students will participate in quarterly assessments to determine academic progress to evaluate needs for remediation and/or enrichment.
- C. Carrington Middle School will expand the AVID program. (i.e. teachers, resources, and site team)
- D. To be in alignment with the DPS district goals, Carrington will increase core instruction periods from 52 to 70 minutes a day.

## **2. Responsiveness to Student Needs**

*District Focus:* Ensure that schools develop practices that are responsive to student needs.

### **Carrington Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Carrington will provide opportunities for interest-based student club days.
- B. Carrington will investigate offering *Capturing Kids Hearts* Teen Leadership elective class.
- C. Carrington will investigate creating an orientation classroom for incoming students that arrive after the 10th day of school. The teacher of this class will orient them to the school, teach the school rules and expectations, request and receive cumulative folders, assess learning needs, and then assign them an academic team..
- D. Carrington will designate a counseling day and support services day to create consistency in weekly schedules.
- E. Carrington will investigate creating a “redirection classroom” to be used as a temporary, alternative placement for students who are not able to remain in the regular classroom. This classroom will be a short-term alternative to ISS and serve as a “chill out” area for students.

## **3. Social and Instructional Equity**

*District Focus:* Ensure that all students have access to high quality programs and resources, and that middle schools are socially equitable, democratic, and fair.

### **Carrington Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Use the school's benchmark test results and EOG growth data to determine instructional priorities for each of the No Child Left Behind demographic subgroups. By the end of the first quarter, each team will develop an intervention plan for struggling students and enrichment plan for high-achieving students.
- B. Carrington will diligently develop strategies to recruit a diverse group of students into high level classes and support them in being successful.

## **4. Organization, Structure, and School Governance**

*District Focus:* Reorganize the structure, calendar, schedule, and governance of the school to provide a more personalized environment and increase academic success.

### **Carrington Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- D. Carrington will implement a daily schedule of 70 minute core time.

- E. Carrington will implement a daily schedule of 45 minute elective classes with flexibility to incorporate A/B days (if needed).
- F. Carrington will use the middle school reform plan to create its 2005 – 2006 School-Improvement Plan.
- G. Carrington will develop a master calendar to include field trips, testing, club days, counseling days, concerts, athletic events, assemblies, PTO and Site-Based meetings, etc. There will also be a clear, concise way of communicating the information to teachers, parents, and students.

## **5. Parent and Community Involvement**

*District Focus:* Involve parents, community agencies, and businesses to support middle school success.

### **Carrington Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- F. Carrington will outline a yearly plan for parent involvement.
- G. Carrington will organize a system to recruit and schedule parent volunteers.
- H. Carrington will streamline the communication process to parents by using Connect-Ed, newsletters, DPS Channel 4, marquis boards, etc.
- I. Carrington will go out into our communities to meet with parents at least twice a year.

## **Chewning Middle School: Strategies for 2005-06**

### **Goals**

The strategies of our individual school plan are aligned with the following district-wide goals for middle school reform:

1. By 2009, 95% of students will exit eighth grade on grade level in reading, mathematics and science (as measured by NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress standard).
2. By 2007, the achievement gap will be eliminated in reading and mathematics in grades 6-8 (District's "Closing the Gap" goal).
3. Each year, all middle schools will meet or exceed their growth targets set by the State Board of Education and measured by North Carolina End-of-Grade, End-of-Course, and Computer Skills tests.

In addition, Chewning Middle School has adopted the following goals:

1. Attendance rate will remain at or exceed 95% in 2005-2006.
2. Suspension rate will be reduced by 10% from the rate of 2005-2006.

### **3. Academic Excellence**

*District Focus:* Increase the academic success of middle school students, as measured by state assessments.

#### **Chewning Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Academic, grade level, and department teams will focus on planning and evaluating lessons by analyzing student work.
- B. The school will provide a computer skills elective course for those students who are not proficient on a computer skills pre-test.
- C. All teachers will integrate essential reading comprehension strategies into regular lessons (i.e. metacognition, annotation, etc.).
- D. All teachers will regularly integrate computer competency skills aligned with the NCSCOS into lesson plans.

- E. The school will provide professional development for all faculty and staff focused on best practices as defined by: AVID, Learning Focused Instruction, and Working on the Work.
- F. Academic teachers will embed interest-based accelerated instructional strategies and materials in unit lessons and monthly school-wide enrichment experiences.

## **2. Responsiveness to Student Needs**

*District Focus:* Ensure that schools develop practices that are responsive to student needs.

### **Chewning Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. A minimum of one-third of faculty members will attend *Capturing Kids' Hearts* training.
- B. The school will offer *Teen Leadership* as an elective course in 2005-2006.
- C. The Administrative Team, in partnership with the district's Positive Behavior Support Coach, will create and implement a Re-Connect classroom for chronically disruptive students.
- D. The school will provide Positive Behavior Support training for all faculty and staff.
- E. The school will provide an effective and efficient Student Assistance Program (SAP) to address the academic, social, and emotional needs of students.
- F. The School Improvement Project, offered through the Department of Public Instruction's Comprehensive School Reform division, will provide technical assistance to improve our service delivery model to exceptional children.

## **3. Social and Instructional Equity**

*District Focus:* Ensure that all students have access to high quality programs and resources, and that middle schools are socially equitable, democratic, and fair.

### **Chewning Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. The Administrative Team, Curriculum Leaders' Council, and all academic teams will use the school's benchmark test results and EOG growth data to determine the instructional priorities for each of the NCLB subgroups.
- B. By the end of the first quarter, each team will develop an intervention plan for struggling students and an enrichment plan for all students.
- C. The Administrative and Leadership Teams, will encourage and monitor positive relationships among students and staff using the *Capturing Kids' Hearts* framework.

- D. Our Administrative Team, Leadership Team, and Curriculum Leaders Council will design activities, experiences, and curriculum aligned with an environment which is socially equitable, democratic, and fair.

#### **4. Organization, Structure, and School Governance**

*District Focus:* Reorganize the structure, calendar, schedule, and governance of the school to provide a more personalized environment and increase academic success.

##### **Chewing Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. The schedules (i.e. regular day, two hour delay, assembly) as adopted by the district will be followed. Elective classes will operate as 90 minute blocks on an A/B day schedule.
- B. Teams of teachers will have common daily planning time.
- C. The school will provide professional development opportunities to develop teacher leadership capacity.
- D. The Curriculum Leaders' Council and Administrative Team will establish study groups to focus solely on professional development related to key components of our instructional program.
- E. The Leadership Team will provide teachers with the opportunity to form informal, voluntary interest groups on a topic of relevance to our school's growth.
- F. The Administrative Team will establish a calendar committee to develop a year-long schedule that prevents overlap of important meetings and priorities.

#### **5. Parent and Community Involvement**

*District Focus:* Involve parents, community agencies, and businesses to support middle school success.

##### **Chewing Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. The school will offer various family/caregiver involvement nights, including: curriculum-focused showcase nights, parent workshops, open houses, information nights (focused on AVID, SECME, etc.), school tours, and report card pick up/student conference nights.
- B. The Administrative and Leadership Teams will establish ongoing, focused communication with parents and the community through a quarterly newsletter, homework hotlines for each teacher/team, principals' weekly ConnectEd phone message, and student planners.
- C. The school will advertise, and make accessible, DATA bus routes to families for all school activities.

- D. The Leadership Team will establish a committee to develop relationships with three community partners. These partners will support us in funding high quality professional development as well as be a community advocate for our school.

## **Durham School of the Arts: Middle School Strategies for 2005-06**

### **Goals**

The strategies of DSA's individual school plan are aligned with the following district-wide goals for middle school reform:

1. By 2009, 95% of students will exit eighth grade on grade level in reading, mathematics and science (as measured by NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress standard).
2. By 2007, the achievement gap will be eliminated in reading and mathematics in grades 6-8 (District's "Closing the Gap" goal).
3. Each year, all middle schools will meet or exceed their growth targets set by the State Board of Education and measured by North Carolina End-of-Grade, End-of-Course, and Computer Skills tests.

In addition, Durham School of the Arts has adopted the following goals:

1. Reduce the number of discipline referrals by 10%.
2. Reduce the number of teacher absences by recognizing and rewarding teachers with 100% attendance and restricting absences due to professional development opportunities during student days.

### **1. Academic Excellence**

District Focus: Increase the academic success of middle school students, as measured by state assessments.

#### **DSA's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Teachers will evaluate their student/class assessments to determine instructional effectiveness and ensure that students are learning what they need to know.
- B. Through grade level and department planning, increase interdisciplinary awareness and coordination of all middle school curricula and skills, both horizontally and vertically, to minimize instructional redundancy is minimized. This can be done
- C. Continue current computer proficiency development practices starting in grade 6.
- D. Increase the number of teachers participating in the Working on the Work observation cycle.

- E. Develop a plan that will determine objectives and strategies to address students who have significant deficits in reading skills.
- F. We will collaborate with nutritional services to develop a plan to increase the number and variety of healthy alternatives.

## **2. Responsiveness to Student Needs**

*District Focus:* Ensure that schools develop practices that are responsive to student needs.

### **DSA's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. One-third of the middle school faculty will attend *Capturing Kid's Hearts* training by 2006, keeping the focus on caring about students.
- B. Develop a mentoring program that involves high school students serving as positive role models to work with middle school and ninth grade students that provides them a more effective transition to high school.
- C. Continue Homebase in sixth grade and develop a plan for Homebase for 7<sup>th</sup> grade.
- D. The guidance department will form groups for special needs.
- E. Expand tutorial opportunities, such as ENCORE, NHS, individual teachers.

## **3. Social and Instructional Equity**

*District Focus:* Ensure that all students have access to high quality programs and resources, and that middle schools are socially equitable, democratic, and fair.

### **DSA's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Extend heterogeneous grouping to additional courses by using flexible grouping.
- B. Create programs and strategies to address the needs of the gifted population and enrich their learning experiences.
- C. Provide professional development opportunities on differentiating instruction.

#### **4. Organization, Structure, and School Governance**

*District Focus:* Reorganize the structure, calendar, schedule, and governance of the school to provide a more personalized environment and increase academic success.

##### **DSA's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Develop a middle school leadership team that meets regularly to determine the needs and issues of the middle school, apart from the high school.
- B. Each team will have a common planning time per day. Teams will be expected to meet every day, for a portion of this time, to plan curriculum together, to conduct parent conferences, and to discuss student needs.
- C. Coordinate and publicize school-wide events through a master calendar.
- D. Restructure the master schedule to minimize split lunches and to maximize the number of core classes offered in the morning.
- E. Increase the consistency of structure in all grade levels.

#### **5. Parent and Community Involvement**

*District Focus:* Involve parents, community agencies, and businesses to support middle school success.

##### **DSA's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Principal will use ConnectEd to communicate with parents and students.
- B. Encourage students to participate in service projects and increase the community outreach through youth volunteerism and job programs.
- C. Principal will hold monthly parent focus meetings.
- D. Increase proactive communication between parents and staff.
- E. Develop strategies in students' Success Plans that will encourage a partnership between the parents and the school.
- F. Utilize Research Triangle Park corporations and local universities to develop partnerships. Enlist the services of parent volunteers to develop and maintain these partnerships.
- G. Continue school wide registration nights to inform parents on how to help their children select classes.

**Githens Middle School: Strategies for 2005-06**

**Goals**

The strategies of our individual school plan are aligned with the following district-wide goals for middle school reform:

1. By 2009, 95% of students will exit eighth grade on grade level in reading, mathematics and science (as measured by NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress standard).
2. By 2007, the achievement gap will be eliminated in reading and mathematics in grades 6-8 (District's "Closing the Gap" goal)
3. Each year, all middle schools will meet or exceed their growth targets set by the State Board of Education and measured by North Carolina End-of-Grade, End-of-Course, and Computer Skills tests.

In addition, Githens Middle School has adopted the following goals:

1. Attendance rate will exceed 95% in 2005-06.
2. The suspension rate will decrease in the 2005-06 school year

**4. Academic Excellence:**

*District Focus:* Increase the academic success of middle school students, as measured by state assessments.

**Githens Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Continue and expand the tutorial program specifically concentrating on remedial EOG skills. This will include tutoring during and after the school day. Remediation will begin in the first quarter of the school year.
- B. Continue our partnership with ENCORE program to provide additional instructional support for our At-Risk students.
- C. Provide ongoing staff development on methods to teach technology to students.
- D. Increase student access to computers during school hours.
- E. Each team will plan and implement at least one interdisciplinary unit per nine weeks. All units will incorporate a technology component.

- F. Continue to implement the AVID program.

## **2. Responsiveness to Student Needs**

*District Focus:* Insure that schools develop practices that are responsive to student needs.

### **Githens Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Provide opportunities for at least one-third of all faculty members to attend *Capturing Kids' Hearts* training by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. This strategy is contingent on district support.
- B. Provide additional support for all student sub-groups through available resources, i.e., the counseling program, all teachers, and other staff members.
- C. With the support of Central Services, increase the number of AIG licensed teachers.

## **3. Social and Instructional Equity**

*District Focus:* Insure that all students have access to high quality programs and resources, and that middle schools are socially equitable, democratic, and fair.

### **Githens Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Offer Positive Behavior Training for all teachers who have not received it. We will also offer refresher courses to other teachers.
- B. Use the school's benchmark test results and EOG growth data to determine instructional priorities for each of the NCLB demographic subgroups. By the end of the first quarter, each team will develop an intervention plan for struggling students and an enrichment plan for high-achieving students.
- C. Offer programs such as Battle of the Books, MSEN, Mathcounts, and Science Olympiad.

## **4. Organization, Structure, and School Governance**

*District Focus:* Reorganize the structure, calendar, schedule, and governance of the school to provide a more personalized environment and increase academic success.

### **Githens Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- D. Open the 2005-06 school year with a schedule that meets the following criteria:
  - a. Each core academic course will meet for 70 minutes each day.
  - b. Two elective classes will meet for periods of 48 minute each day.

- E. Provide core teams with a common planning time of 99 minutes per day. Elective teams will have 107 minutes planning each day. All teams will meet every day for one planning period (48 minutes) to plan and implement interdisciplinary units, coordinate programs, hold parent conferences, hold grade level and elective meetings, and discuss student progress.
- F. Require all faculty to attend all staff development training (Positive Behavior Support, literacy, technology, etc.) when offered during the instructional day at the specified time.

## **5. Parent and Community Involvement**

*District Focus:* Involve parents, community agencies, and businesses to support middle school success.

### **Githens Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. In cooperation with the PTA, offer four curriculum nights during the school year: "Algebraic Thinking in the Real World," "Current Events at the Dinner Table," "The Biology of Adolescence," and "Keeping Your Teenager Reading During the Summer."
- B. Publish team (core and elective) newsletters for parents that include an academic calendar, all testing dates, important deadlines, and a summary of the team accomplishments during that period. Attach these newsletters to progress reports and report cards (approximately every 4½ weeks).

**Lowe's Grove Middle School: Strategies for 2005-06**

**Goals**

The strategies of our individual school plan are aligned with the following district-wide goals for middle school reform:

1. By 2009, 95% of students will exit eighth grade on grade level in reading, mathematics and science (as measured by NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress standard).
2. By 2007, the achievement gap will be eliminated in reading and mathematics in grades 6-8 (District's "Closing the Gap" goal)
3. Each year, all middle schools will meet or exceed their growth targets set by the State Board of Education and measured by North Carolina End-of-Grade, End-of-Course, and Computer Skills tests.

In addition, Lowe's Grove Middle School has adopted the following goals:

1. Increase attendance rate to 95%.
2. Decrease or suspensions by 2%

**5. Academic Excellence:**

*District Focus:* Increase the academic success of middle school students, as measured by state assessments.

**Lowe's Grove Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Develop school-wide computer skills curriculum aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.
- B. Develop a school wide writing plan.
- C. Pursue AVID training for entire staff.
- D. Reduce core class size.
- E. Participate in district's staff development for implementation of Riverdeep.
- F. Continue implementing Reading Apprenticeship strategies; train new teachers in Reading Apprenticeship.

G. Expand Pre-College Academy to include sixth grade second semester.

## **2. Responsiveness to Student Needs**

*District Focus:* Ensure that schools develop practices that are responsive to student needs.

### **Lowe's Grove Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Continue to implement Middle School Transition plan for sixth graders. All sixth graders will be on two-teacher teams, will eat lunch in their classrooms, and will have “cubbies” instead of lockers. Each sixth grade team will have a team-building picnic at beginning of year.
- B. Provide staff development on Student Assistance Program for all staff members; develop uniform strategies to improve the SAP process.
- C. To improve communication, teachers will use a “Problem Box” in their classroom.
- D. One-third of the faculty will participate in *Capturing Kids Hearts* training.
- E. Continue Redirection Room for re-educating students on behavior and academic skills.
- F. Continue guidance groups for over-age students and for at-risk males and females; add groups for overweight students and those with persistent discipline issues.
- G. Investigate having teachers “loop” with their students.
- H. Develop a plan to serve over-age students, including transition activities and criteria for mid-year promotion of over-age eighth graders to ninth grade.

## **3. Social and Instructional Equity**

*District Focus:* Ensure that all students have access to high quality programs and resources, and that middle schools are socially equitable, democratic, and fair.

### **Lowe's Grove Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Ensure equity of access to accelerated course offerings and instructional materials.
- B. Disaggregate test data with teachers, teams, and grade levels to identify areas for remediation and enrichment.
- C. Restructure and refocus after-school for academic excellence.
- D. Recruit and hire teachers who are “highly qualified” by No Child Left Behind standards.

- E. Provide opportunities for multi-grade instruction, allowing for students to participate in advanced math courses.
- F. Increase pre-college opportunities for under-represented students.

#### **4. Organization, Structure, and School Governance**

*District Focus:* Reorganize the structure, calendar, schedule, and governance of the school to provide a more personalized environment and increase academic success.

##### **Lowe's Grove Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Implement a daily schedule that increases core time to 70 minutes per course and offers electives 90 minutes per day on an A/B block schedule.
- B. Reorganize schedule to allow class changes for one grade level at a time; continue practice of walking students to and from elective classes.
- C. Continue system of elective teachers scheduling students and documenting each student's history.
- D. Provide Advisor/Advisee time during lunch.

#### **5. Parent and Community Involvement**

*District Focus:* Involve parents, community agencies, and businesses to support middle school success.

##### **Lowe's Grove Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Hold "Parent Chat" meetings at regularly scheduled times during the school year.
- B. Hold four Open Houses during the year; use these occasions to distribute report cards.
- C. Use ConnectEd to communicate frequently with parents.
- D. Continue to develop our partnership with IBM.
- E. Pilot a parent information program within McDougald Terrace housing community to identify informal leaders and train them to be school/home liaisons.

**Neal Middle School: Strategies for 2005-06**

**Goals**

The strategies of our individual school plan are aligned with the following district-wide goals for middle school reform:

1. By 2009, 95% of students will exit eighth grade on grade level in reading, mathematics and science (as measured by NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress standard).
2. By 2007, the achievement gap will be eliminated in reading and mathematics in grades 6-8 (District's "Closing the Gap" goal)
3. Each year, all middle schools will meet or exceed their growth targets set by the State Board of Education and measured by North Carolina End-of-Grade, End-of-Course, and Computer Skills tests.

In addition, Neal Middle School has adopted the following goals:

1. Attendance rate will exceed 96% in 2005-06.
2. Serve 100% of our over-aged students through an alternative academic setting.
3. Decrease the 2004-05 suspension rate by 25%.
4. By the end of the first quarter, establish a homework hotline and automated phone notification system to keep parents and students informed

**1. Academic Excellence:**

*District Focus:* Increase the academic success of middle school students, as measured by state assessments.

**Neal Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Provide a remediation program that will begin first semester and run throughout the school year to provide supplemental instruction to at risk students.
- B. Provide enhancement programs that will begin first semester and run throughout the school year to provide enriched experiences (in both core and extended core classes) to advanced students.
- C. Each team will plan and implement a two-week interdisciplinary unit per semester including collaboration with enrichment teams.

- D. In 2005-06, identify special needs students (e.g., AIG) through testing of all students. In subsequent years, only incoming sixth grade, teacher-recommended, and/or parent-nominated students will be tested.

## **2. Responsiveness to Student Needs**

*District Focus:* Ensure that schools develop practices that are responsive to student needs.

### **Neal Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Provide individual mentors to at-risk students utilizing all Neal staff members.
- B. Provide students with structured extracurricular activities during the school day (e.g., clubs).
- C. Provide students with transportation to extracurricular activities after school hours.
- D. Develop additional reward programs to acknowledge students for academic and behavioral excellence.
- E. Provide training for faculty and staff on effective communication skills and dealing with tenuous situations.
- F. Establish two-teacher teams for all sixth graders and over-aged students.

## **3. Social and Instructional Equity**

*District Focus:* Ensure that all students have access to high quality programs and resources, and that middle schools are socially equitable, democratic, and fair.

### **Neal Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Use benchmark test results and EOG growth data to develop an intervention plan to increase individual student success.
- B. Provide multi-lingual support to facilitate improved communication between staff, students, and parents.
- C. Continue to offer Positive Behavior Support training to all teachers who have not had it.
- D. Develop a peer mediation program for students to teach them effective communication and techniques for handling difficult situations.

#### **4. Organization, Structure, and School Governance**

*District Focus:* Reorganize the structure, calendar, schedule, and governance of the school to provide a more personalized environment and increase academic success.

##### **Neal Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Modifying the current schedule to include the following for the 2005-2006 school year:
  - a. Each core academic course will meet for 70 minutes each day.
  - b. Each elective course will meet for 85 minutes on an A/B block schedule.
- B. Strengthen our Student Government Organization to give students a sense of empowerment and to increase school morale.
- C. Establish common planning times for daily team and/or grade level meetings, including meetings for all "special programs" (e.g., ECP and AIG).

#### **5. Parent and Community Involvement**

*District Focus:* Involve parents, community agencies, and businesses to support middle school success.

##### **Neal Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Encourage and expect parents to attend at least one parent-teacher conference per semester.
- B. Improve school presence in the community by having more programs in which the community can be involved. These programs will occur both during and after school hours and both on school grounds and at locations within the community.
- C. Meet with parents at the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year to establish expectations, faculty roles and responsibilities, and effective methods for communicating throughout the school year.
- D. Establish partnerships with community businesses to increase community investment in the success of our students.
- E. Create parent/student/community suggestion boxes to solicit honest feedback.

**Rogers-Herr Year Round Middle School:  
Strategies for 2005-06**

**Goals**

The strategies of our individual school plan are aligned with the following district-wide goals for middle school reform:

1. By 2009, 95% of students will exit eighth grade on grade level in reading, mathematics and science (as measured by NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress standard).
2. By 2007, the achievement gap will be eliminated in reading and mathematics in grades 6-8 (District's "Closing the Gap" goal).
3. Each year, all middle schools will meet or exceed their growth targets set by the State Board of Education and measured by North Carolina End-of-Grade, End-of-Course, and Computer Skills tests.

**1. Academic Excellence**

*District Focus:* Increase the academic success of middle school students, as measured by state assessments.

**Rogers-Herr Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Purchase more software and hardware for our school. Ensure that all teachers have at least minimum competency with technology by assessing them at the beginning of the year. Train all teachers to use technology in their instructional programs, using both in-house workshops and Atomic Learning.
- B. Evaluate our exceptional children's program and create a better support system for those students (e.g., teaming, planning, professional development, and scheduling).
- C. Expand enrichment and remediation programs for our students (for example, American Math Competition, RAM Workshop, Duke Partnerships, etc.).

**2. Responsiveness to Student Needs**

*District Focus:* Ensure that schools develop practices that are responsive to student needs.

**Rogers-Herr Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Look critically at different programs we offer and be sure that we are accurately following the entrance criteria and requirements for the students they are intended to serve (for example, AVID, AAA, BOOST, etc).
- B. Provide students who need additional educational support with opportunities for academic support during the school day through the Staff Mentor Program, Student Club Days, and other strategies.

### **3. Social and Instructional Equity**

*District Focus:* Ensure that all students have access to high quality programs and resources, and that middle schools are socially equitable, democratic, and fair.

#### **Rogers-Herr Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Provide written documentation for our programs and adhere to the guidelines we set for our school.
- B. Provide Initially Licensed Teachers and teachers new to Rogers-Herr with support.
- C. Throughout the year, provide teachers with detailed reports of student performance (for example, Benchmark testing reports); provide professional development on how to use test results to plan and differentiate instruction.

### **4. Organization, Structure, and School Governance**

*District Focus:* Reorganize the structure, calendar, schedule, and governance of the school to provide a more personalized environment and increase academic success.

#### **Rogers-Herr Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Core teachers will have 70 minutes of instructional time daily in Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies. Each student will have 90 minutes of instructional time in electives each day. Sixth graders will have two 45-minute elective classes per day. Seventh graders will have two 45-minute electives per day the first semester and transition in the second semester to two 90-minute-per-day classes on A/B days. Eighth graders have 90-minute classes on A/B days during both semesters.
- B. Implement a school-wide tardy policy to reduce the amount of instructional time lost. Communicate to parents that our instructional day begins at 7:30 and ends at 2:30 each day.

## **5. Parent and Community Involvement**

*District Focus:* Involve parents, community agencies, and businesses to support middle school success.

### **Rogers-Herr Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Teams will articulate a strategy to communicate with all parents on a weekly basis. They will also communicate grade-level student expectations to parents at the beginning of the year. Whenever possible, all information sent home will be translated for Hispanic parents and students.
- B. Counselors will offer evening programs to assist parents in helping students with the transition to middle school and high school.

**Shepard Middle School: Strategies for 2005-06**

**Goals**

The strategies of our individual school plan are aligned with the following district-wide goals for middle school reform:

1. By 2009, 95% of students will exit eighth grade on grade level in reading, mathematics and science (as measured by NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress standard).
2. By 2007, the achievement gap will be eliminated in reading and mathematics in grades 6-8 (District's "Closing the Gap" goal)
3. Each year, all middle schools will meet or exceed their growth targets set by the State Board of Education and measured by North Carolina End-of-Grade, End-of-Course, and Computer Skills tests.

In addition, our school has adopted the following goals:

1. Shepard will meet or exceed the growth target on all state ABCs measures.
2. Shepard will score at or above the district proficiency rate on the seventh grade writing test.

**1. Academic Excellence:**

*District Focus:* Increase the academic success of middle school students, as measured by state assessments.

**Shepard Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Each core subject will take responsibility for a particular aspect of the computer skills curriculum to ensure technology proficiency according to state standards.
- B. Provide ongoing staff development in the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Program (MYP), especially for new teachers.
- C. Provide orientation and training to teachers on using the Riverdeep software.
- D. Address all recommendations made by the IB review team in during the spring 2005 site visit.

- E. Develop a method of ensuring individual student compliance with the requirements of the IB Program.

## **2. Responsiveness to Student Needs**

*District Focus:* Ensure that schools develop practices that are responsive to student needs.

### **Shepard Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Realign teams to decrease student/teacher ratio.
- B. Review the duties and responsibilities of the guidance team for those responsibilities that are germane to Shepard while keeping in alignment with the National Guidance model.
- C. Review the AIG program and develop specific strategies to improve the academic growth of students served in this program.
- D. Expand the implementation of the Positive Behavior Support Plan, and provide training sessions for staff and parents.
- E. Provide one-third of the faculty with the *Capturing Kids' Hearts* training.
- F. Hold a staff retreat focused on the book *Hear Our Cry, Boys in Crisis* by Paul Slocumb.

## **3. Social and Instructional Equity**

*District Focus:* Ensure that all students have access to high quality programs and resources, and that middle schools are socially equitable, democratic, and fair.

### **Shepard Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Implement the IB Project as an interdisciplinary project for each grade level.
- B. Reinstate the practice of using IB Portfolios.
- C. Invite district-level curriculum coordinators to meet quarterly with staff members to discuss curriculum issues and implementation of the Riverdeep materials.
- D. Provide parents of sixth graders with information about selecting middle school courses that align with the IB Diploma Program and university requirements.

#### **4. Organization, Structure, and School Governance**

*District Focus:* Reorganize the structure, calendar, schedule, and governance of the school to provide a more personalized environment and increase academic success.

##### **Shepard Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Open the 2005-2006 school year with a schedule that includes the following criteria:
  - a. Each academic course will meet for 70 minutes daily.
  - b. There is a 90 minute block each day for electives.
- B. Relocate classrooms to make smaller learning communities.
- C. Administrative Team will meet with each teacher team at least once a month

#### **5. Parent and Community Involvement**

*District Focus:* Involve parents, community agencies, and businesses to support middle school success.

##### **Shepard Middle School's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:**

- A. Develop a plan for ongoing communication between the school and the parents.
- B. The guidance department will develop and maintain resources for community involvement.