The Laboratory School develops and implements curriculum based on clearly defined expectations for student learning. Curriculum instructional guides aligned with state Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) and national Common Core Standards exist at all levels of instruction. Meeting time is provided daily to allow teachers time to collaboratively develop guides, lesson plans and curriculum maps which ensure alignment. Throughout all grade levels, documents such as Course Syllabi, Criterion Referenced Learning Guides (CRLGs), Understanding By Design (UBD) unit plans and daily lesson plans show evidence of alignment.

We promote active involvement of students in the learning process, including opportunities to explore application of higher order learning skills and investigate new strategies to apply their learning. Samples of rubrics, exemplars, models, and lesson plans show that students are taught to assess and develop plans for their own learning. Students actively participate in both real world and classroom activities in which they are challenged to apply their knowledge in novel ways, such as peer tutoring or partnering high school “Big Buddies” with elementary classes. Content driven curricular and extra-curricular experiences such as the Cub Garden (Based on the concept of the Edible Schoolyard), Science Olympiad, Science Saturday, and visits to the World War II Museum are provided.

We gather, analyze, and use data and research in making curricular and instructional choices. Evidence of assessments that are aligned with GLEs is kept on file either in house or electronically. Formative and summative assessments are referenced in the CRLGs. Teachers are given collaborative meeting time during the school day to analyze and use data to plan instruction and make curricular decisions. Teachers use on-going assessments to monitor student performance and guide instruction. For example, data from writing samples are submitted for further analysis to determine Response to Intervention groups, if needed. Formal professional development opportunities within and outside of the school day are provided for our staff members to dialogue and learn new assessment techniques.

Our teachers carefully implement instructional strategies based on current research, as evidenced by selected materials present in the classroom. Teachers are encouraged to take advantage of professional development to assist in incorporating the most effective instructional strategies. Many teachers are involved in both local and national organizations and employ that network to most effectively plan instructional strategies. In the areas of math and reading, students are ability grouped, as well as provided whole-group instruction in order to meet students’ specific strengths.

Professional dialogue is encouraged during which teachers exchange experiences regarding making challenging content accessible to students with diverse gifts and needs. Grade/content level teachers identify individuals who are most at risk of not achieving their full potential and develop support strategies for them. All students have equal access to the full curriculum and to activities that focus on higher order thinking. The curriculum includes a variety of aligned teaching strategies, materials, and assessments designed to meet individual needs and abilities.

Our school allocates and protects instructional time to support student learning. Morning announcements are short and to the point, activity day bell schedules ensure that all classes are met, and scheduled breaks between classes allow students to take care of personal responsibilities outside of class time.
The school provides for articulation and alignment between and among all levels of school. Teachers share learning guides and tests with other teachers (K-12) in the same subject areas to ensure easy transition from one grade to the next and to ensure equity in subjects taught by more than one teacher.

We implement many levels of interventions to help students meet expectations. Re-teaching is done daily for students who have not met expectations, as evidenced in lesson plans and implemented through the Response to Intervention (RTI) programs in place at all levels. Test scores are analyzed and triangulated with other sources of data to evaluate student performance and provide for appropriate grouping of students. Formative assessments are used to remediate students as needed. CRLGs are used daily in classrooms to help students improve their learning by assessing their own progress and creating a plan of action. Planning meetings among grade levels, departments and teams where teachers are planning interventions for the students can be observed.

We monitor school climate and take appropriate steps to ensure that it is conducive to student learning. A sense of belonging is evident in results from teacher, student, and parent surveys. Displays of student work throughout the school show the existence of positive self esteem in our school. There are school-wide behavioral expectations and routines that reflect goals for safety and orderliness. Minimal instructional time is spent on discipline, and education backs the enforcement of rules. A school discipline committee considers rule infractions. Hallway and classroom cameras are in place, and "safe" rooms are indicated, along with call buttons from classrooms to the main office.

Our school provides comprehensive information and media services that support the curricular and instructional programs. The presence of extensive multi resource libraries in both the elementary and middle/high school buildings offers ready access to both students and teachers. Technology and multimedia resources are supported through the use of Activboards in the classrooms and access to subscription websites such as Brainpop, Enchanted Learning, United Streaming (videos), and Edhelper. The Literacy Library is another tool that the teachers are able to use to support the curriculum being taught.

Our students and staff members have regular access to instructional technology and a comprehensive materials collection that supports the curricular and instructional program. Technology integrated in all classrooms supports student achievement; and is used in all aspects of the curriculum, instruction and assessment. All classrooms have access to computers via in-classroom or mobile carts. Teachers and students exhibit a high level of comfort in their use of technology. An annual technology survey, provided by our technology coordinator, provides an inventory of community members’ technology knowledge and skills and trainings on effective use of media resources. The coordinator uses the data collected through the survey to determine what technology training will be offered the next school year.
Standard 3

Teaching and Learning