



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Governor

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Lt. Governor

BRET SCHUNDLER
Commissioner

June 16, 2010

Dr. Joseph Miceli, Principal
Randolph Middle School
507 Millbrook Avenue
Randolph, NJ 07869

Dear Dr. Miceli:

Thank you for participating in the 2009-2010 New Jersey Schools to Watch (NJSTW) Program. The application process required you and your staff to engage in significant reflection, analysis, and planning. We hope you found the process helpful in assessing your current programs and planning for the future. We have enclosed a certificate recognizing your school as a participant in the New Jersey Schools to Watch program.

This year, panels of educators reviewed every application submitted to the New Jersey Department of Education. This process allows for general and school-specific feedback based on your application and observations from your site visit to help drive continuous improvement. We hope you consider this feedback as you continue your journey to excellence.

Part One: General Feedback

- The application must clearly articulate the elements of an effective middle grades program as detailed in the self-rating rubric. The rubric drives the review process and is not simply an exercise for the application. The rubric addresses academic excellence, developmental responsibility, social equity, and organizational structures and processes as key elements of a School to Watch. Applications must clearly address each of those areas.
- The application must be clear and specific about the school's programs and how they improve outcomes for students. It is better to describe a few key programs in detail than to provide a list of programs and activities without explanation. The application should focus on what makes the school unique and successful and should not use jargon or "buzz words" indiscriminately.

www.nj.gov/education

- Scores on the self-rating rubric should average a 3.4 or higher for most of the criteria. If an indicator falls below that score, it must be addressed in the narrative.
- Academic achievement must be fully addressed and the data for all subgroups examined and discussed. We will verify the most recent test data prior to consideration.
- An analysis of the school's suspension data must be completed and a critical examination of any discrepancies amongst subgroups. Current efforts to address any issues in this area must also be identified. While this may not be common practice, it is an important part of the NJSTW criteria.
- Schools to Watch are continuously striving to improve their programs and practices. A plan for the future must be included and should align with the results of the Self-Study and Rating Rubric.

Part Two: School-Specific Feedback of Application and Site Visit

Evidence of Academic Excellence

- Grade-level teaming allows for smaller learning communities and individualized instruction.
- The school conducted a longitudinal study of state assessment data from 2005 through 2008, and identified student achievement gaps.

Evidence of Developmental Responsiveness

- Observers noted that there is a good rapport between teachers and students.
- Advisory sessions are well structured and provide students with a sense of belonging and an adult advocate to support their growth.

Evidence of Social Equity

- The school offers an array of extra-curricular activities for students to enrich their experiences.

Evidence of Organizational Structures and Supports

- The Committee for Social, Emotional and Character Development, which includes parents and students, continuously assesses school culture and climate.
- The school is researching scheduling options in an effort to provide more enhanced educational opportunities.

Concerns and Omissions

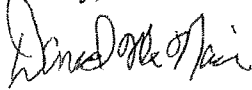
- The Self-Study and Rating Rubric contains many elements that are below 3.4; however, these areas were not addressed in the narrative.
- The application did not address the gender discrepancy in suspensions.
- The application states that courses in the world languages, French and Spanish, are considered electives. It is unclear how a student will be able to meet the NJCCCS in world languages.
- Observers noted that direct instruction was the most commonly used method of instruction. In addition, observers did not see higher-level questioning strategies being used.
- Observers noted a lack of consistency in the functioning of the teams. Several team meetings were visited and teachers were not held accountable for addressing student achievement issues. When concerns were raised, they were forwarded to the guidance counselor for resolution.
- Observers noted that there was not a consistent school-wide policy implemented for re-taking tests. Some students indicated that they were permitted to re-take tests, while other students stated that they were not allowed to do so.

We encourage you to discuss this information with your staff as you consider applying for designation in the years ahead. In addition, we also encourage you to contact and/or visit the schools designated as NJSTW. Information for these schools is located on the department's website at <http://www.nj.gov/education/dsis/stw/0708/>.

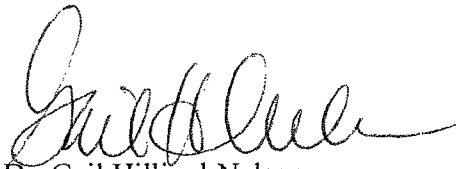
Finally, the 2010-11 application process has been updated with some changes made from last year. Please go to <http://www.nj.gov/education/clear/school/stw/> for the latest information on the program.

Once again, thank you for participating in this exciting program.

Sincerely,



David McNair
Co-Director, NJ Schools to Watch
Division of District and School Improvement



Dr. Gail Hilliard-Nelson
Co-Director, NJ Schools to Watch
Garden State Partnership for Teacher
Quality
Kean University

DM/GHN/Z:\NJ STW\2010 feedback letters\randolph
Enclosure

c: Rochelle Hendricks
Mario Rodas