

Check all boxes that apply in each group:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Middle School | Previous Blue Ribbon School? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Junior High School | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> X <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High School | If yes, years(s) _____ |

Code: 2006-0001

2005-2006 Blue Ribbon Schools Program Certification Sheet

School Information

Name of Principal	Mr. Dan Warren				
Official School Name	East Rockford Middle School				
School Mailing Address	8615 Nine Mile Road				
City	Rockford	State	Michigan	Zip Code	49341
Telephone	616-863-6140	Fax	616-863-6565		
Website/URL	www.rockfordschools.org/schools/erms/		Email	dwarren@rockford.k12.mi.us	

I have reviewed the information in this package, including the eligibility requirements on page 3, and certify that to the best of my knowledge, all information is accurate.

Signature of Principal:

Date:

District Information

Name of Superintendent	Dr. Michael Shibley				
District Name	Rockford Public Schools				
District Mailing Address	350 N. Main Street				
City	Rockford	State	Michigan		
Telephone	616-863-6320	Fax	616-866-1911		

I have reviewed the information in this package, including the eligibility requirements on page 3, and certify that to the best of my knowledge, all information is accurate.

Signature of Superintendent:

Date:

School Board Representative

Name of School Board President/Chairperson	Mr. Charles Boekeloo
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I have reviewed the information in this package, including the eligibility requirements on page 3, and certify that to the best of my knowledge, all information is accurate.

Signature of School Board President/Chairperson:

Date:

Preparation of School Self-Assessment

Representatives of all relevant stakeholder groups (including administrators, teachers, other school staff, students, parents, and community representatives) should be involved in the preparation of the School Self-Assessment. Information about its preparation is required under F3 and is used in scoring that item in conjunction with the information requested below. List the individuals involved in preparation. If necessary, add an additional page numbered "2a".

Blue Ribbon Application Steering Committee

Greg Crowe	Teacher, North Rockford Middle School, Primary Author/Editor
Jaclynn DeKuiper	Parent, Editor
Jim Shillington	Teacher, Technical Advisor
Steve Landane	Counselor
Mike Ramm	Assistant Principal
Tom Hosford	Teacher/Activities Coordinator
Cindy Kitzrow	Media Specialist/District Director of Media Service
Lynnelle Rehkopf	Teacher
Sharon Wells	Teacher
Michelle Falk	Teacher
Annette Campbell	Teacher
Dan Warren	Principal

Parent Readers

Carol Ruhf
Carol Jewell
Claire Fawcett
Nancy Doud
Wendy Stephens
Mark Stephens
Janene Heslip
Dawn Beemer

East Rockford Middle School Staff

First Name	Last Name	POSITION
Gary	Allers	Teacher
Barbara	Altizer	Teacher
Amy	Banfield	Teacher
Jennifer	Breuker	In-School Suspension
Jeff	Bryant	Teacher
Lynne	Bryant	Teacher
Adam	Burkholder	Teacher
Mary	Cantile	Cook
Sarah	Cavalli	Teacher
Kathy	Cizauskas	Paraprofessional
Carol	Cordes	Teacher
Patricia	DeKraker	Teacher
Kelly	Delacher	Teacher
Kristopher	DeYoung	Teacher
Kristin	Dowedite	Teacher
Christy	Dykgraaf	Teacher
Jim	Ellis	Special Ed Teacher Consultant
Cathy	Fusee	Secretary
Tamara	Golsteyn	Cook
Doug	Haan	Teacher

Judy	Hadlock	Secretary
Barbara	Hekhuis	Counselor
Dave	Hodgkinson	Teacher
Heather	Hoexum	Psychologist
William	Hostein	Teacher
Elizabeth	Huls	Teacher
Pam	Hutchison	Paraprofessional
Carol	Jorgensen	Teacher
Cassie	Juczynski	Secretary
Rachel	Kibbe	Teacher
Rebecca	Kilgore-Longtin	Teacher
Kimberly	Klaes	Teacher
Cindy	Knudsen	Teacher
David	Lee	Teacher
Christine	Lyon	Teacher
Terry	Marmion	Speech Therapist
Lynda	McGarvey	Teacher
Ray	McNally	Teacher
Sheryl	Mellema	Cook
Kelly	Mervenne	Teacher
Martin	Milner	Custodian
Patricia	Mollema	Teacher
Jon	Muller	Social Worker
Cassidy	Munger	Teacher
Robin	Noakes	Secretary
Angela	Ohlman	Teacher
Tracy	Ouellette	Teacher
Beth	Pawloski	Cook
Rita	Persinger	Custodian
Brian	Pickerd	Teacher
Deb	Pomarius	Teacher
Fred	Posont	Teacher
Robert	Pratt	Teacher
Nancy	Prominski	Paraprofessional
Steve	Ramsay	Teacher
Linda	Redmann	Cook
Linda	Rickert	Teacher
Daniel	Rottier	Teacher
Joseph	Seif	Custodian
Diane	Sellhorn	Teacher
Lori	Shepard	Cook
Jane	Steele	Teacher
Bob	Streeter	Security
Deborah	Thiel	Cook
Tim	Todd	Custodian
Gerry	VanCamp	Custodian
Lucy	VanLare	Teacher
Denise	Visger	Teacher
Larry	Watters	Teacher
Kathy	Wendling	Secretary
Mick	Wesche	Teacher
Sue	Williams	Paraprofessional
Richard	Wylie	Teacher

PART 1 – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this nomination package certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility, previous recognition in the Blue Ribbon Schools Program, and compliance with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school is a middle school, a junior high school, or a senior high school. Or the school is K-12 and the middle, junior high, and/or high school components are applying. The entire school is applying unless the school is k-12.
2. The school has been in existence for five full years.
3. The school has not received recognition as a Blue Ribbon School since October 1999.
4. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
5. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
6. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school, or the school district as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
7. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; and if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.
8. Once the program is fully operational, the nominated school must have a grade of either A or B under the Michigan Department of Education's Education YES Accreditation Program.

PART II: BACKGROUND AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

District

- 1.** Total number of students (PreKindergarten-12) enrolled in the district: **7795**
- 2.** Total number of schools in the district: **14**
- 3.** District Per Pupil Expenditure: **\$6912** Avg. State Per Pupil Expenditure: **\$8142**

Nominated School

- 4.** Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
 - ☐ Urban or large central city
 - ☐ Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban school
 - ☒ Suburban
 - ☐ Small city or town in a rural area
 - ☐ Rural
- 5.** Number of years the principal has been in his position at this school: **6**
If less than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school? ____
- 6.** Number of students enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in the school:

GRADE	#MALES	#FEMALES	GRADE TOTAL
6	162	147	309
7	160	153	313
8	166	165	331
		TOTAL	953

- 7.** Racial/ethnic composition of the students in the school
 - 0.0%** American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0.3%** Asian
 - 0.8%** Black or African American
 - 1.4%** Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.0%** Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 97.5%** White
 - 100% TOTAL**
- 8.** Student turnover, or mobility rate during the past year: **4.7%**
- 9.** Total number of English Language Learners in the school: **1**
- 10.** Total number of students who qualify for free/reduced priced meals: **66**
- 11.** Total number of students receiving special education services: **96**

1 Hearing Impairment	0 Traumatic Brain Injury	52 Specific Learning Disability
0 Deaf Blind	2 Physical Impairment	18 Speech & Language Impairment
1 Autism	11 Other Health Impairment	0 Visual Impairment
2 Cognitive Impairment	11 Emotional Impairment	0 Severe Multiple Impairment
- 12.** Describe any significant changes in the data reported in items 4-11 that have occurred during the past 5 years and explain why the changes have occurred.

13. Indicate the number of full- and part-time staff members in each of the below categories.

	NUMBER OF STAFF	
	FULL-TIME	PART-TIME
Administrators	2	1
Classroom teachers	40	6
Special resource teachers/specialists	9	3
Paraprofessionals	2	2
Support staff	11	6
TOTAL NUMBER	64	18

14. Total number of classrooms in the school: **56**

15. Year school was built: **2000** Date(s) of any major renovation(s): ---

PART III: SUMMARY STATEMENT:

“A Tradition of Excellence: Quality Community, Quality Schools” is the motto of the Rockford Public School system. This motto sums up what helps make Rockford and East Rockford Middle School such a dynamic place for learning. ERMS, located in a suburban/rural community just north of Grand Rapids, Michigan, is one of thirteen schools in a large school district spanning 100 square miles. We bus seventy-six percent of our approximately 7800 students. The school district experienced rapid growth in the 1980’s and 1990’s and Rockford area residents approved millages to support facility expansion. ERMS is the newest addition to Rockford Public Schools and the Rockford community. We opened in the fall of 2000 as the second sixth through eighth grade middle school in the district.

ERMS came into existence when the district’s sole middle school (currently North Rockford Middle School) and the sixth grade building (Sheridan Trail Middle School) split to form two sixth through eighth grade middle schools. This was an exciting time for our district as staff from NRMS and STMS (both State and National Blue Ribbon Award Schools) assisted us in creating a new middle school. The staff had already spent a great deal of time studying “schools in the middle”, and had brought that expertise to ERMS. When ERMS opened its doors for the first time, the community supported a fully teamed building. Although district budget constraints no longer allowed for full teaming in the district’s two middle schools after two years of existence, the staff of ERMS accepted the challenge to continue offering an exemplary middle level program, based on the middle school concept. Because of teacher retirements and teacher movement within the district over the last five years, the makeup of our teaching staff has changed. This has afforded the ERMS administration and staff to continue the tradition of hiring many energetic educators who are enthusiastic about teaching middle level learners, and are armed with the latest research and innovative educational practices.

The process of opening a new middle school in Rockford Public Schools allowed us the opportunity to build a fresh climate and culture. Gathering and implementing early input from parents, students, and staff established a trusting relationship that remains strong throughout our building. The special consideration given to successfully orienting sixth graders to a middle school setting for the first time is the primary reason that our teaming concept at sixth grade has withstood budget challenges. The existence of two middle schools has established collegiality among middle school educators in our district, which has greatly impacted the building of our curriculum mapping process and influences staff development decisions. The caring, cooperative, and collaborative culture existing at ERMS attracts quality new teacher candidates and generates positive transfer requests from teachers within our district.

The ERMS teaching staff is highly qualified, and consists of skillful, innovative individuals who employ child centered practices in the classroom. We believe in building positive connections with our students that establish trusting adult and child relationships. We realize the unique developmental needs of the students we serve and allow that focus to influence all of our decisions and practices. The ERMS staff promotes lifelong learning and is dedicated to addressing the academic, social, and emotional needs of each student. A challenging curriculum exists and is afforded to all students, with special attention paid to students who are in need of support services and accelerated programs. Each child has access to a wide range of elective offerings that focuses on lifelong learning skills, and a diverse co-curricular program that emphasizes participation, social development, and fun.

All stakeholders involved with our building are afforded input in decisions regarding our school. We constantly focus on our goal of providing a challenging, age appropriate curriculum in a safe, caring environment that enhances cognitive and social/emotional growth. Realizing the impact that home can have on student success, communication with parents is a constant, ongoing process. Staff is empowered to provide input concerning the operation of our school. The staff

remains very active in the building improvement process, implementation of North Central Association goals, staff hiring, and all department functions.

Curriculum mapping throughout all of the curricular areas, as well as embedded technology and life skills objectives, help prepare each ERMS student with the skills to be successful in high school and beyond. Constant monitoring of student performance through standardized test analysis, review of common assessments in the core subjects, and student marking period grades, combined with effective electronic web-based parent communication, establishes a foundation for our student success. Our MEAP scores that consistently rank with the highest in the county and state are a measure of the successful education afforded all ERMS students. Successful student scores on the MEAP, combined with the quality of our education programs, have allowed ERMS to be recognized as an “A” school by the federal No Child Left Behind Education Yes! program.

At ERMS, adults collaborate to ensure that a positive, caring environment exists for student learning. We exemplify how a quality community and a quality school combine to create a tradition of excellence. We are proud of our success and we continue to seek ways to increase our knowledge and skills to meet the ever changing, global needs of our students. “Are we preparing our students for the future we remember, or for the future we can imagine?” is a frequently quoted question guiding our district vision and actions.

PART IV: VISION/MISSION

The mission of Rockford Public Schools is to provide teaching and learning environments which will ensure, with the support of the students, parents, and community, that all students, upon graduation, will have the academic and social skills and strategies to be lifelong learners. The East Rockford Middle School mission states, “We, the East Rockford Middle School staff, in cooperation with parents, community, and students, are committed to providing a safe physical and emotional environment in which all students have the opportunity to demonstrate growth in academic and social skills, leading to a lifestyle of continual learning.”

At East Rockford Middle School we are committed to providing a safe physical and emotional environment in which all students have the opportunity to grow in academic and social skills that foster a lifestyle of continual learning. We understand our students represent varied learning styles, thus we strive to create a learning environment where students learn through many different means in order to have students state that they “like it here”. This simple, but potent statement reflects a school culture where supportive, approachable adults connect with students by aligning their actions to the unique needs associated with early adolescents. As middle school educators, we engage our students in a challenging, but age appropriate curriculum that prepares them to be successful as they journey into young adulthood.

We understand the importance of parental involvement and establish avenues for parents to serve as partners in their child’s education. Our Volunteers In Education (VIE) program, composed of over 200 parent volunteers, provides parents numerous opportunities for direct involvement in our school. The existence of a positive relationship with the larger educational community is integral to our school success.

Our ERMS staff engages in an organized, continuous improvement process that focuses on learning. Teacher collaboration in a trusting, collegial educational climate is the foundation for our decisions, while analysis of student achievement on varied assessments provides collective data, which guides our course of action. Providing equitable educational opportunities for all students drives us toward doing what is best for them. Our middle school mapping process exemplifies staff commitment to establishing and maintaining a well-articulated curriculum, making collective decisions about student learning, and establishing staff development aligned with identified teaching and learning needs.

Our highly qualified staff understands that teaching and learning drives education. We know our students must be adaptable to the ever changing world. We model lifelong learning and demonstrate a readiness to change through the creative instructional activities introduced in the classroom. Our established trusting and cooperative collegial relationships allow for collective decision making. Our Building Improvement Teams (BIT) are designed to elicit staff input and decisions regarding school operations. Our NCA school improvement process reflects our collegiality.

PART V: SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

A. STUDENT FOCUS AND SUPPORT

A1. How is the school's population best described? What are the students' needs? How does the school assure that the needs of all students are met?

The vast majority of the 953 East Rockford Middle School students reside in traditional two parent households. Five percent of our students receive a free or reduced lunch. On average, sixty-two percent of ERMS students will be on the academic honor roll each marking period. Our failure rate is less than 1% of the student population. Student daily attendance is ninety-five percent. Once our students enter our building as sixth graders, ninety-six percent will remain with us through eighth grade. Two and a half percent of our student population is African-American, Asian, or Hispanic. Ten percent of our students receive special education services or have Section 504 plans. Ninety-eight percent of our students attended one of our eight district elementary buildings.

The needs of our students in their middle school years present many challenges directly related to physical, social, and emotional maturation. Emphasis is placed on teaching the "whole student". Our students experience a challenging, yet age appropriate curriculum that builds future success. ERMS students engage in a variety of co-curricular programs that promote individual and social growth in a participatory, caring, adult guided environment (Appendix I). The core curriculum is mapped (C4) and aligned with the State of Michigan grade level benchmarks and standards. Student scores from the MEAP and North Central Accreditation (NCA) goal collection data are used to align and improve curriculum.

Our actions as a staff are guided by the understanding that middle school students do not learn in the same way or at the same pace. We recognize that, although our student population is not diverse in terms of ethnicity, our students have needs and learning styles that are diverse. Our staff is knowledgeable in the areas of brain research and learning (E2). Constant communication with home, ongoing assessment of student performance, and frequent curriculum review help to ensure that students are able to reach their potential. The counseling office maintains an open line of communication with staff and parents to strengthen student success. The Student Assistance Team (SAT) (A2), our child study team, frequently reviews the progress of students with low academic success and other concerns. Individual Development Plans (IDP) (C2) are written and implemented for our identified gifted and talented students at the sixth grade. Students seeking an advanced curriculum have the opportunity to apply for our ROCK (Rockford's Opportunities for Creative Kids) program (C3) in the seventh and eighth grades.

A2. What nonacademic services and programs are available to support students, and how do they relate to the student needs and school goals identified?

Student support services include a student activities coordinator, a media specialist, two counselors, a school psychologist, a gifted and talented coordinator, a school social worker, a health care aide, a speech and language therapist, a teacher consultant, an occupational therapist, a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) specialist, a district nurse and a physical therapist. We offer homebound and hospitalized services.

The counseling department at ERMS provides a wide range of services that are available to all students. Individual and group counseling are continual services. Referrals to the counseling department come from staff, parents, and self referrals. Counselors work closely with outside agencies to make referrals if long term intervention is necessary. Staff meetings (staffings) are held to discuss concerns regarding the progress of individual students. Section 504 plans are coordinated through the counseling office, as well. Frequent monitoring and consistent communication with the parents of 504 students allows for modification of each student's plan, if necessary. Because of student success through this program, some students no longer need these services.

One core group that supports students at ERMS is the Student Assistance Team (SAT). This child study team, comprised of the school psychologist, social worker, counselors, administrators, and special education staff, is the avenue through which individual case investigation, placement, and

coordination of services takes place. This group works closely with parents, students, and staff to make sure that all students in need of services are reviewed and appropriate interventions are implemented.

Careful monitoring of student progress by staff and the SAT resulted in the Tools class, a study skills class for general education students. The Tools instructor closely monitors student progress and works with teaching staff, parents, and counselors to help foster improved student academic progress.

A new after school tutoring program was developed for students in an apartment complex in the district so that they could get help and encouragement to complete their homework. The program meets twice a week in the community room at the complex.

The National Honor Society implemented a peer tutoring program aimed at providing academic assistance by its members to students requesting academic help. A district wide summer school program is in place to meet the needs of students who are in need of remediation. The Grand Rapids Area Summer School Program (GRASP) is a correspondence summer school program available to students in need of academic assistance.

As part of our efforts to curb bullying in school, our staff has initiated a silent mentoring project (B2). Staff is available before school, during lunch hours, and after school to provide necessary assistance to students. Members of the sixth grade teaching staff provide an after school study session program. The D.A.R.E. (Drug Awareness and Resistance Education) program is presented to students in the seventh and eighth grade (B4) every other year.

A3. How does the school determine and address the developmental needs of students as they move from grade to grade?

The staff at ERMS has clearly dedicated itself to educating the middle school learner. Just as the needs of middle school learners are unique, so too is the amount of communication required with home to help parents make effective decisions that are necessary to help their child.

In late winter, a morning orientation session is held for all incoming sixth graders. Students are bussed from their elementary feeder schools to ERMS where teachers, counselors, and administrators welcome them with an overview of the sixth grade program. That same day, an evening orientation program is held for parents of incoming sixth grade students to explain the program and all its facets in greater detail. The ERMS principal and counselors visit each elementary feeder school to explain the sixth grade program to the fifth grade staff and answer any questions that they might have. Fifth grade teachers then complete a learning style assessment and a student profile (academic and behavioral) for each student. Students also complete a learning style inventory. This information determines each student's team placement, ensuring that classrooms are balanced by gender, ability level, learning style, and behavior. Students are placed on one of five teams, or magnets (C6), based on the results of this accumulated information.

The sixth grade program is designed to make a smooth transition from the elementary schools to ERMS. In late summer, an orientation session is held for all incoming sixth graders. At this orientation session, students have a chance to meet their teachers, the administration, and counseling staff, tour the building, tour the cafeteria, and practice opening their lockers. Parents also participate in this orientation, attending presentations by the administration and counseling staff. A student's two classrooms are located next to each other in the sixth grade wing, limiting the amount of traveling time for the students. Lockers are located in the immediate vicinity. Since each team consists of two teachers, they get to know their students very well. This intimate teaming approach helps with the transition from elementary to middle school. All sixth graders have their own lunch period and extra curricular activities specifically designed for their age group.

In late winter, an evening orientation program is held for current sixth grade parents to review seventh grade curriculum and explain course selections. The counseling staff then visits sixth and seventh grade classrooms to explain the seventh and eighth grade curriculums and the course options available to students.

For eighth graders going into ninth, an evening orientation session is held for parents to explain the ninth grade curriculum, course requirements, and selection procedures. ERMS counselors spend time with the ninth grade counseling staff to help coordinate placement of students and to communicate

concerns regarding students who may need special attention. Time is also spent working closely with the gifted and talented staff and special education staff to ensure appropriate student placement.

A4. What co-curricular activities are available for students and how do these activities extend the academic curriculum?

As a middle school philosophy, we believe that a student's participation in co-curricular activities is a vital part of their overall development as a person. Because of this philosophy, numerous activities are offered for our students; many of these activities are based on student interest that is compiled from yearly surveys. Students have the opportunity to participate in interscholastic athletics, intramurals, academic clubs, and after school non-athletic activities (Appendix I). Students and parents are introduced to all of the co-curricular activities offered during orientation at the beginning of the school year, and students are encouraged to become active in some after school capacity, with an emphasis on participation. Throughout the year co-curricular activities are listed on our website. While there are fees involved in many of these activities, parents and students know that in case of financial hardship, fees for students are routinely waived so that any student wanting to participate in a co-curricular activity may do so.

Since East Rockford Middle School opened its doors in the fall of 2000, we have maintained and improved on all of the sports offered to our boys and girls. Our athletic program is spread over four seasons and includes fifteen activities. Sixty-seven percent of our students will participate in athletics (Appendix I). In 2002, we added a seventh and eighth grade Competitive Cheerleading team, further increasing the opportunities for middle school athletes. Approximately eighty-five percent of our students participate in co-curricular activities. On average, participation in co-curricular activities at ERMS has increased every year. Because of our high student participation rate, we feel it is essential to incorporate important life skills, democratic values, awareness of diversity, and physical activity into our activities. These are the same positive qualities that are incorporated into our academic curriculum.

A5. How does the school address the accessibility of its facilities to students and others with disabilities?

East Rockford Middle School was built under the newest Barrier Free Code requirements for the year 2000, which meet current standards. Our facilities are very accessible and provide multiple ways for students and adults to tour the school grounds and participate in activities. There are ample parking spaces for disabled individuals. We have ramps located at all entrances to the school from the parking lots and service drive, as well as in the cafeteria and for entry to the stage. All doors are wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair. All bathrooms have automatic flushing toilets and urinals, sink sensors for washing hands, and at least one handicapped stall. We provide an elevator for anyone who needs to use it. We rent handicapped Porta-Jons for football and track athletic contests. Students in physical education can use an adapted pull-up bar while sitting in a wheel chair or lying on the floor. Also, the secretaries' workstations are accessible to individuals using wheelchairs.

B. SCHOOL ORGANIZATION AND CULTURE

B1. How does the culture of the school support the learning of all its members and foster a caring community?

The East Rockford Middle School staff is dedicated to providing a safe physical and emotional environment in which all children have the opportunity to grow academically and socially. When you walk into our building, it is obvious that the warm and nurturing environment is conducive to promoting student learning. Our goal is to have students feel safe, comfortable and confident that adults support their learning. To accomplish this, the ERMS staff creates an environment that is student-centered, keeping in mind the unique needs of the middle school learner. Learning is engaging, standards are high, and all stakeholders in the education of our students are actively involved.

The members of the ERMS learning community all have a stake in our common goal: student success. Decisions are made regarding the organization and culture of the building through the collective efforts of administration, staff, parents, and students. The Building Improvement Teams (BIT) (E1) process engages staff in thoughtful conversations and brainstorming regarding many important school related issues. Department heads are actively involved in the discussion of curricular issues and the

promotion and monitoring of student achievement. In department meetings, decisions are made regarding curriculum, department budgets, curriculum mapping, MEAP preparation, cross curriculum activities, and coordination of district wide curriculum decisions.

The ERMS staff is currently involved in a five year school improvement cycle through NCA called Performance Accreditation. Through this model, staff analyze student achievement data in both academic and school climate areas. After the data is reviewed, four target areas for student improvement are selected by staff consensus. Such ongoing programs are communicated regularly to the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) (G2).

The student council, with guidance from their staff advisors, provides regular input regarding school issues and is directly responsible for generating numerous student activities throughout the school year. This same group of students makes decisions regarding financial support of various projects and building needs, such as supporting the Adopt a Family program during the holidays.

The ERMS staff actively promotes and endeavors to find assistance for students and families in need. Coordinated by the counseling office, our staff raised \$900.00 through donations at staff luncheons to help identified families and students during the holiday season.

The office staff provides a warm, caring, and “customer friendly” contact with students and parents. The counseling office maintains an open door policy with students and parents. Because the staff is in tune to the emotional needs of our students, many referrals are made to the counseling office regarding a variety of issues. The SAT (A2) also is actively engaged in monitoring student needs and working closely with families to make sure that student needs are met.

B2. What opportunities do students have to build sustained, caring relationships with teachers and adults?

East Rockford Middle School students feel that adults care about them. Custodians, teachers, paraprofessionals, media specialists, office assistants, administrators, and other adults who work in our school understand middle school students, and students feel comfortable approaching us. Every day ERMS students benefit from our caring, flexible, and helpful attitudes.

During the 04/05 school year staff determined that students would benefit from a greater understanding of appreciating others. After interviewing and listening to students, we embarked on a school wide program to decrease school aggression and bullying at ERMS (C6).

As part of our efforts to increase self-esteem and curb bullying among peers in the school, East Rockford Middle School’s staff initiated a silent mentoring project. Staff members were asked to identify “at risk” students who would benefit from another positive connection to ERMS. Students may be selected because of academic, social, or behavioral concerns. A data sheet that includes a recent school picture about each of these students was created and posted on our building intranet. Staff members visited each student’s profile and added non-confidential information about which they were aware (i.e. hobbies, unique strengths). After the data sheets were completed, staff members “adopted” one or two students to mentor. Students do not know that they are being mentored since the interaction is “natural” and consists of random contact, like striking up a conversation in the hall, patting them on the back, or offering a hello or smile. Students may be added to the program throughout the school year and staff members visit the intranet silent mentoring binder to sign up to mentor newly nominated students. The goal of the program is to build positive relationships with students, conveying the message that, “An adult likes me, thinks I am important, and is making the effort to get to know me.”

ERMS offers students a wide variety of opportunities for interaction within the school community. Our staff interest in building caring relationships with students is evident in that sixty-five percent of teachers participate in coaching or supervising a co-curricular program throughout each year. Additionally, teachers from each grade organize and supervise a grade level trip or event geared towards having fun and interacting beyond the classroom walls. All seventh graders, their teachers, parent volunteers and volunteer high school seniors participate in a yearly “Survivor Day” which is an outdoor recreational activity aimed at developing team building skills. Rockford High School students interested in education as a career serve as teacher interns in our building. Many of these individuals are former students who were influenced by their middle school teachers.

Both members of our counseling department meet weekly with groups of students needing assistance with social issues. Other ways adults build relationships with our students include interacting with students between classes, while on bus duty, and at after school events.

We also have many opportunities for students to work alongside adults at ERMS. During lunch periods, staff and students work together at our Hallway Card Shop and School Store. Students also work with adults in the concession stand at after school athletic events. Students from our self-contained education classroom help our custodian clean and rearrange the cafeteria after each lunch.

Teachers are always on the lookout for students displaying positive behavior. For the last five years, we have proudly used our “Gotcha” program to recognize and reward students who are doing something positive. A weekly drawing for small prizes, and a semester drawing for large prizes are held to help promote positive behavior and relationships.

Teachers at ERMS intentionally develop relationships with students. Concrete ways in which teachers build relationships with their students include asking each student to bring a picture of themselves to be posted in the classroom, going together to a three day camp, putting on plays, greeting students on arrival to class, conducting student led parent teacher conferences, conducting after school study sessions for students that need extra help, team building activities, and teacher/student dialogue journals.

B3. How are teachers hired in the school? How are teacher assignments made?

Hiring teachers to teach our students is the most significant decision we make. We strongly believe this process is key to maintaining our established focus on quality learning for all students. The Rockford Public School’s District Hiring Manual is used extensively in the hiring process. The district’s hiring procedures involve a systematic process of reviewing resumes for selection, formulating an interviewing committee, establishing interview questions, interviewing candidates, completing background checks, and making recommendations to the Human Resources Department for presentation to the Board of Education for hire. The Superintendent of Schools and the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources are also involved in the process by meeting with candidates selected by the interviewing committee.

At East Rockford Middle School, teachers play a very important role in the decision to hire staff. Teachers join building administrators to serve on interviewing committees and participate in developing the interviewing format. We involve and seek input from our counselors in the hiring process; especially regarding how well our teacher candidates will connect with all students. We believe that the teachers we hire must be able to connect effectively with all learning abilities and styles. All of our candidates must meet the highly qualified endorsement standards outlined by No Child Left Behind so all teachers will have a major or minor in their subject area.

We recognize that, just as students have diverse learning styles, teachers also have diverse teaching styles. It is extremely important at East Rockford Middle School that we only hire teachers who understand the unique needs of middle school students. We stress that teaching and learning drives the success of our school. Effective instruction is the catalyst for student achievement. Our teacher hires must demonstrate that they are skillful in curriculum content, lesson design, and instructional delivery. As important, our teachers must be passionate about teaching middle school and must connect positively with kids. We believe that our candidates must teach with their heart, as well as with their mind.

Teacher assignments at East Rockford Middle School are determined by the building principal. Our building philosophy is to assign teachers to subject areas for which they are certified, and where they have a strong desire to teach. We feel this is the best combination for student success. It is always our intent to limit the number of teacher preps for each teacher to two or less. We also recognize that matching teacher style with student learning style is a successful combination.

B4. What is the school’s plan for safety, discipline, and drug prevention? What is the record for the last five years?

East Rockford Middle School maintains a safe and orderly environment. In order to maximize academic achievement and personal growth, we believe it is essential that our students feel safe and supported by the adults and peers in the building. Throughout our history we have implemented

procedures that ensure student safety, discipline, and drug prevention. We are fortunate in that our district security director, Mr. Bob Goethal is a nationally known speaker on school safety planning.

Clearly communicated and practiced emergency procedures are a chief priority of the culture at ERMS. All classrooms are equipped with a phone with a direct line to security. All administrators, our security guard, and office personnel have walkie-talkies. All administrators also have district issued phones. We conduct eight fire drills and two tornado drills each school year. In addition to fire and tornado drills, East Rockford Middle School also has established procedures for “Code Red”, or lockdown, and “Code Yellow”, or evacuation. Procedures for all drills are clearly posted in each classroom and routinely communicated to staff. Before each scheduled drill, teachers educate students about the importance of practicing the drills and they define the procedural expectations. During each drill, assigned adults, or sweep teams, are responsible for ensuring that appropriate areas of the building are empty, all students are accounted for, the proper authorities are contacted, and all people are safe. Practicing these drills is done on a scheduled and unscheduled basis. After each drill, a team meets to review the exercise and make revisions to increase efficiency and ensure safety.

The discipline policy of ERMS is designed to motivate students to make better choices and decisions in the future. As a staff, we believe that clear communication and a team effort, including all stakeholders, are essential to efficiently achieve our goal. In order to remain consistent, teachers and administrators use six basic disciplinary actions (demerit, detention, extended detention, snap suspension, in-school suspension, and out-of-school suspension) to formally document inappropriate actions. Rather than simply being punitive, our process stresses responsibility and education. As a team, we consistently collaborate to develop alternative behavior plans for students that repeat inappropriate actions. Additionally, during the past year we have developed and implemented a program that requires students that are assigned to after school detention and in-school suspension to participate in a character education component geared toward promoting responsible behavior.

In addition to their classroom procedures, teachers have collaborated and established clear behavioral expectations for students while they are in the hallway, in the cafeteria, or waiting for the bus. As a staff we have adopted a “Definition of Aggression” that is posted in classrooms throughout the school that clearly defines our consistent zero tolerance policy for aggressive acts among students. Also, teachers have developed plans for supervising “high risk” areas such as the hallways between classes, the cafeteria during lunch, and the loading areas for students riding the bus after school.

Throughout the school day our commitment to a proactive approach to safety and drug prevention is evident. East Rockford Middle School has a full time security officer who is trained in using our surveillance equipment, oversees students during non-academic time, and assists in investigations. ERMS brings in a canine team to conduct searches of our building during school hours. As part of the physical education curriculum, seventh and eighth grade students participate in the D.A.R.E. program taught by a Rockford Police officer. This program teaches kids how to recognize and resist the direct and subtle pressures that influence them to experiment with alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other drugs. Also in the physical education classes, the county sheriff’s department teaches boater and ORV safety classes for all students.

As a result of our proactive approach to student discipline, the huge majority of ERMS students are cooperative and do not engage in destructive behaviors (Appendix II).

C. CHALLENGING STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM

C1. How does the curriculum serve the broad goals for student learning and development that the public expects education to achieve: personal and intellectual growth, citizenship, and preparation for work and higher education? What relative emphasis does the school place on these goals in the curriculum?

As evidenced by the federal Education Yes! evaluation done last year, the curriculum at ERMS is a rigorous and comprehensive one that impacts all students. Rockford Public Schools received all A’s for our Adequate Yearly Progress in this report. All students, including special education and other special needs students, are expected to receive challenging instruction and demonstrate success in our board-mandated curriculum.

Additionally, the district committed \$75,000 for providing staff with training and resources to implement a comprehensive curriculum mapping process to ensure that all students receive the same curriculum. This process of mapping the district curriculum is ongoing, with staff continuing to align and realign curriculum to ensure that all students receive a curriculum that is consistent with public expectations. The district has conducted a gap analysis between the grade level objectives found in the mapping and those that have been set forth by the state. The information garnered from this gap analysis has been used to closely align our middle school objectives with state benchmarks. Our student MEAP scores are evidence of our success (Appendix V).

The curriculum mapping process also involves articulating and embedding life skills objectives across the curriculum for all students. These life skills include being a cooperative worker, a critical thinker, an effective communicator, an effective problem solver, and a self-directed learner.

With the help of our NCA process, students continue to learn reading, writing, and problem solving strategies embedded across our curriculum. Along with our MEAP scores, internal assessments conducted by NCA teacher committees indicate increased student achievement in these goal areas.

Grade level technology objectives are embedded in all subjects across the curriculum. Teachers regularly schedule their classes to use our four computer labs. Students are further encouraged to access computers in the media center on an individual basis. Facilitated by the counseling office, all eighth graders prepare a career interest profile through the Michigan Occupational Information System (MOIS), and compile an Educational Development Plan that is updated yearly through high school. Students also learn more about available technology in the world today by taking elective classes such as computer, two levels of technology education, and CAD classes.

Assisting students to develop an improved awareness of, and appreciation for, others is also a school wide goal. A current project of the ERMS staff deals with appreciating diversity. Staff and students have participated in a presentation on diversity and tolerance. The staff sponsored a “Mix-It-Up” day where students were encouraged to sit next to someone that they did not know during their lunch hour.

Growing out of our nation’s crisis on 9/11, ERMS has also been involved with “Common Threads”, a project that originated from one of our art teacher’s classrooms. Highlighting the qualities of Faith, Hope, Love, Growth, Compassion, Trust, and Courage, students designed jewelry kits that represented these values. Banners bearing the titles of these qualities adorn the school cafeteria.

Another active organization at ERMS is the Community Contact Club. This group, coordinated by staff, provides volunteer opportunities throughout the Rockford community. Projects have included a coat drive, leaf raking, volunteering at the local community service center, and running a fundraiser to help support a local shelter for battered women.

C2. How is the school organized to provide for differing student academic needs within the school’s goals, priorities, and curriculum?

All students, regardless of ability level, are enrolled in the same school board-mandated curriculum. The goal is to prepare our students to be successful at the ninth grade level, and to prepare them to be lifelong learners.

All students receive instruction in the four core subjects: Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. The only ability grouping that is implemented at ERMS is in the area of math. Prior to entering sixth grade, students are offered the opportunity to test into the advanced math curriculum. Students who qualify for this advanced program are enrolled in a very rigorous curriculum beginning with algebra and culminating with honors geometry in the eighth grade. Students who do not complete this screening process in fifth grade, and students transferring into the district, have the opportunity to test into the program at any time.

Students not in the advanced math curriculum are placed in one of three different levels of math in seventh grade: Math 7, Intermediate Math 7, and Advanced Math 7. Placement in seventh grade math is determined by the recommendation of the sixth grade math teacher in conjunction with the parents. The basic Math 7 class is co-taught by a math teacher and a special education teacher. Class size is kept smaller than the other levels of math so individual students can receive extra help as needed. Math levels

are similarly organized in the eighth grade, where Math 8 (also co-taught), pre-algebra, and algebra are offered to students. Students in all grades have the ability to move freely between the levels of math if they demonstrate adequate achievement and have the recommendation of staff.

In the area of Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies, students are enrolled for regular level courses with the exception of the ROCK classes. The ROCK program consists of courses that meet the needs of gifted and talented students, as well as those students who need extra enrichment. Placement in this program begins as students enter the seventh grade. A rather extensive testing process exists to identify students who might be successful in this curriculum. Individual assessment on the PLAN test, combined with MEAP scores and grade level academic achievement, are used to identify students. Parent and teacher observations are also taken into consideration when identifying students for this program. Students transferring into the district, and students who would like to be considered for this program, are tested with appropriate achievement in the classroom, supporting test scores, and teacher recommendation. An Individualized Development Plan (IDP) is developed for each identified gifted and talented student in the sixth grade. Staff, parents, and students develop these plans, which are periodically reviewed during the school year and modified to meet the needs of the student.

Advanced placement in some of the elective programs also exists. Students have the option to enroll for advanced levels of speech, wood technology, technology education, computer assisted design, art, and music. Placement in these courses is determined by student achievement and teacher recommendation.

Special education programming helps identified students succeed within the general curriculum by providing adaptations, accommodations, and modifications. Special education teachers provide a continuum of educational options for students who qualify for services under IDEA '97 regulations and least restrictive regulations. There is a wide array of options for instruction offered in the special education department on a continuum that includes a self-contained classroom, resource room classrooms, team taught classrooms, and teacher consultant services. Students may access these programs as determined by the Individualized Education Program Committee (IEPC) process. All special education students have the opportunity to take the same elective courses as non-disabled students and participate in non-academic/co-curricular activities. Student performance is carefully monitored in all classes and appropriate adaptations, accommodations, and modifications in class work and scheduling are made to meet the needs of the student receiving special education services.

C3. How does the school ensure that diverse learners (for example, students with disabilities, gifted and talented students, students with limited English proficiency, migrant students, and students placed at risk) have the opportunity to learn challenging content and achieve at high levels?

We feel that a major part of our success in reaching diverse learners and students in our building stems from our solid curriculum mapping and structure. Our teachers know, and are accountable for, what content they present to every learner. Defining the teaching objective gives teachers the freedom to focus on a delivery that will meet each student at his or her ability level, and will fit his or her personal learning style. By teaching to planned/organized objectives, students can flow in or out of special programs knowing that the curriculum they have studied parallels that of the rest of the students in our building.

Knowing that we have a demanding curriculum, several programs are in place to support the challenged learner. Our Tools class is available to students needing instruction in effective "school skills" that better prepare them for success (A2). Our teachers are instructed in SIM (Strategic Instruction Model) (C4) strategies to add further structure to the learning environment. We have a full continuum of special education resources and staff, including a teacher consultant who helps students transition out of special education and into a full general education curriculum, team teachers who work with special needs students within the general education classroom, resource room teachers who adapt methods and strategies for teaching our approved curriculum to the individual learners, and self-contained classrooms flexible enough to have students pick up elective classes in the general education stream. Ancillary staff, a social worker, a speech and language specialist, an ESL teacher, and a school psychologist are also available to support the teachers in their program, or students on an individual basis if needed.

Our District ESL Coordinator screens students with limited English proficiency. The coordinator meets with the family and student to help bridge the gap between home and school. The coordinator establishes an individual education plan with classroom teachers to support ESL students.

While our curriculum is challenging, we have students who benefit from accelerated programs. Our gifted and talented students receive an updated IDP upon entering our building. Our Gifted and Talented Coordinator supports our teachers by supplying information and materials. Our ROCK program and Advanced Math classes are fluid, allowing students to participate in as many, or as few classes as necessary to meet their individual needs. When it is in the best academic, social, and emotional interest of the child, accommodations are made allowing participation in out of school programs, such as homebound, individualized tutoring, and partnering with social service agencies.

Our SAT (A2) works to ensure that all student needs, including social, emotional, and academic, are met. Teachers, parents, or any concerned staff member, can refer a student to the SAT team. Interventions may include any or all of the following: weekly progress reports coordinated between teachers and parents, short term counseling with the guidance office, individualized assignment of a mentor or concerned adult to work with the student, academic referral for testing to determine appropriate interventions, development of a Plan of Assistance, referral to outside programs, or coordination with a student's physician. Student schedules are also adjusted by the counseling office to adapt to a student's ongoing needs throughout the school year.

C4. What is the process for continuous curriculum renewal at the school? What questions about curriculum is the school currently addressing?

The process for continuous curriculum renewal at East Rockford Middle School is grounded in the belief that mastery of a core of basic skills is the foundation of a good education. Teachers at ERMS have developed curriculum maps for every subject taught in our school. The curriculum map is a tool that generates discussion and action among teachers about subject area content, subject area essential questions, instructional planning, teaching and learning, curriculum resources/materials, and student assessment. The maps allow for a chronological presentation of the curriculum, foster collegial collaboration with all middle school teachers in the district, and allow all teachers to "be on the same page" when it comes to ensuring all students are taught the same curriculum. The curriculum maps are aligned with the State of Michigan grade level Standards and Benchmarks for each subject area.

Our department heads meet with building and district level administrators to plan for the time and resources necessary to address mapping. As a result of our discussions and planning, we have adopted the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM) from the University of Kansas to enhance teaching and learning. We have dedicated time for our district SIM trainer to work with all teachers in developing and implementing instructional strategies to improve student achievement. We are in the process of developing common assessments in core subject areas that align with the essential learner questions identified in our maps. We will use our common assessments, along with our MEAP data, to drive decisions about curriculum alignment, instruction, and student achievement.

We have identified through our curriculum mapping collaboration process that a systematic approach for addressing curriculum across the district would further assist our students. As a result, we are currently training our staff in Professional Learning Communities to further our collaborative efforts toward continuous school improvement.

C5. Successful schools offer all students opportunities to be engaged with significant content. How does the school ensure that students achieve at high levels in the core subjects?

ERMS maintains the development of lifelong learners as one of its major goals. The curriculum is designed to accomplish this goal for all students. Developmentally, the staff knows that middle school students will engage more in learning when there is a connection to their own lives. The curriculum endeavors to engage learners in "real life" applications of the material, and promotes transference to the real world.

The curriculum mapping in which the ERMS staff has been engaged provides a comprehensive guide showing how skills are taught in each of the core content areas. All courses at ERMS have been mapped through the collaboration of content area teachers. The mapping process has articulated our

curriculum across grade levels ensuring that all students are taught a solid foundation of knowledge in the content area. Mapping has also established collegial dialogue across grade levels concerning student preparation for success as they progress through the curriculum.

The overall emphasis in the **Language Arts** curriculum at ERMS is communication through reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The curriculum for students in grade six is the same for all students. In grades seven and eight, regular Language Arts and the ROCK program are offered. The essential questions guiding curriculum content are:

Sixth grade:

Why is spelling important?
Why do we punctuate?
What makes a great story?
How do stories from other cultures and times affect me?
What can readers do when they don't understand?
Why write?
How can effective writers engage their readers?
What do good speakers sound like?
What does a good listener listen for?

Seventh and Eighth grade:

What strategies do good readers use?
What makes a great piece of writing?
What makes an effective speaker?
What makes a good listener?
How does literature help us understand each other?
How does LA prepare us for life?

Science at ERMS is taught in all three grades with different emphasis placed at each grade level. Sixth grade science is General Science, the seventh grade curriculum deals with Life Science, and the eighth grade curriculum focuses on Physical Science. The curriculum in grade six is the same for all students. In grades seven and eight, regular science and the ROCK program are offered. The essential questions guiding curriculum content are:

What are the characteristics of effective experimental design?
How is the scientific method used to solve a variety of problems?
How can data be represented appropriately using tables and graphs?
How can models and diagrams effectively be used to present scientific concepts or ideas?
How is scientific knowledge communicated?
How does science relate to what is happening in the world today?
How do you classify according to similar/different characteristics?

Mathematics in sixth grade is the same curriculum for all students, with the exception of Advanced Sixth Math. In seventh grade, there are four levels available to students, depending on ability level (Math 7, Intermediate Math 7, Advanced Math 7, and Algebra). In eighth grade, there are also four levels available to students, depending on ability level (Math 8, Pre-Algebra, Algebra, and Honors Geometry). The essential questions guiding curriculum content are:

Why is accuracy important in mathematics?
How is math a language in itself?
What would the world look like without numbers?
How do you apply and connect mathematical ideas to everyday life?
How are number sense and common sense related?
In what ways can math enhance or hinder expression and communication?

In the sixth grade, the **Social Studies** offering is Western Hemisphere, in seventh grade the course is Eastern Hemisphere or ROCK Eastern Hemisphere, and in the eighth grade the social studies course is U.S. History or ROCK U.S. History. The essential questions guiding curriculum content are:

Sixth grade (Western Hemisphere):

How can events in other places affect our lives?
Why is it important to know how to use a geographer's tools?
How is the history of an area related to the current culture?
What are the similarities and differences of regions in the Western Hemisphere?
What is the relationship between the people and the environment?

Seventh grade (Eastern Hemisphere):

What values and traditions do people have in common?
What affects the relationships among countries?
How has physical geography affected history and cultures?
How have people been shaped by historical experiences?
How do the themes of geography clarify our understanding of the world?

Eighth grade (U.S. History):

Why do Americans need core democratic values?
What are the factors of conflict?
How do we work to build unity after conflict?
What makes people or events historically significant?
Is expansion always progress?
Why does where we live influence how we live?

The curriculum mapping that has been completed thus far clearly articulates the curriculum throughout all of the major core subjects. Because our staff has had a "hands on" approach in developing the curriculum maps, and since the maps are posted on the district website, all staff are fully aware of the contents of the mapping and make sure that all material is covered in their classrooms.

There are many ways in which the curriculum is integrated. Life skills are embedded into the curriculum across the content areas, covering the areas of being a cooperative worker, a critical thinker, an effective communicator, an effective problem solver, and a self-directed learner. All staff endeavor to develop these skills in the students to promote lifelong learning. Technology objectives are also embedded across the curriculum for all students in all the major content areas. Through our involvement with NCA, we have developed the following goals and worked on them in all content areas: reading comprehension of informational texts, problem solving skills, and writing skills.

This curriculum is also followed through the special education courses. Sometimes curriculum in these courses is modified to meet the needs of students with disabilities, but the goal is to mainstream students into regular classes. The continuity of special education programs makes the transition between levels very effective.

C6. What other content areas or programs play essential roles in the school wide curriculum goals?

One of the unique features of the curriculum at ERMS is the sixth grade magnet program. In place for twelve years, the magnet program is a successful fixture of our middle school. Since its inception, teachers, parents, and students have embraced this program enthusiastically.

Recognizing the developmental needs of middle school students, the sixth grade magnet program utilizes the concept of teaming. All sixth graders receive their core instruction from a team of two teachers. The teaming philosophy assists students in making the social, emotional, and academic transition from elementary to middle school.

The truly unique aspect of this program is the delivery of instruction. Using the phrase, "It's not how smart you are, it is HOW you are smart," instruction is geared towards addressing all student learning styles. The five magnets were developed using Howard Gardner's Eight Intelligences: Visual/Spatial, Logical/Mathematical, Verbal/Linguistic, Musical/Rhythmic, Body/Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, and Naturalist. The magnets are: Communication Technology, Health Quest, Earth Keepers, Fine Arts, and Structures. Student placement on magnet teams is determined by utilizing a variety of information, including a student learning style inventory, teacher academic/behavioral checklist, and parent input. Each magnet is balanced according to learning style, gender, academic ability, and behavior.

All magnets deliver the same board mandated curriculum with a theme to focus on throughout the year. However, the mode of instruction used in curriculum delivery is that of the intelligences supported by that magnet and its title. Students are allowed to demonstrate mastery of material through special activities that are pertinent to their magnet. Some examples include: Fine Arts students demonstrate understanding of the material by composing and performing a song, skit, rap or poem; students on the Earth Keepers magnet adopted the stretch of road immediately in front of the school and go out to collect trash and make sure that it is maintained; and students on the Structures magnet research, design, and build a replica of a famous building.

Special education students are clustered on one of two magnets with academic support provided by a special education staff member assigned to their magnet. Gifted and talented students are also clustered on one of two magnets, with teachers on those magnets designing an IDP for each student.

As a result of our NCA work, the staff is addressing the issue of bullying. Developmentally, the staff recognizes the impact that aggressive behavior can have on students who are targets of bullying. Staff has been inserviced on bullying by Marcia McAvoy, a local child psychologist. The training consisted of defining bullying, how to identify it, and learning strategies aimed at addressing it. Teachers introduced the issue of bullying with all students in the classroom and generated student involvement regarding its impact on our school. A definition of aggression was developed by staff and students and posted throughout the building. It states: "Stand Up Against Aggression! Aggression is Harmful. Looks, gestures, words, threats, actions. . . Make responsible choices to stop aggression at ERMS!"

"High Risk" areas where aggression may occur were identified as supervision of academic hallways, students in the hallways during class, the cafeteria before school, cafeteria supervision at lunch, supervision during bus duty, and locker rooms. Staff brainstormed and developed strategies to help deal with each of these designated areas of concern.

Staff also defined and formatted a "15 second intervention" that can be used to address target behaviors when they occur. A crucial component of our anti-bullying program includes staff committing themselves to communicating and modeling a consistent message to students concerning aggression.

Seventh and eighth grade students attended a dramatic presentation given by nationally known speaker, Michael Fowlin, which addressed the issues of diversity, tolerance, and acceptance. Sixth grade students participated in an assembly presented by a local mime designed to heighten their awareness to the issue of bullying. All students attended a presentation by our speech and drama class, which presented five different scenarios about bullying/teasing, and steps that could be taken to help rectify each situation.

The Revealers, a book dealing with bullying from a student perspective, was chosen by our teachers for all students to read in their language arts class. Classroom discussions and designed curriculum activities related to the book further educated students about the issue. To enhance student empathy for others and better understand the issue of bullying, the author of *The Revealers*, Doug Wilhelm visited ERMS. Mr. Wilhelm's presentation provided students, parents, and staff with insight into how each individual can make a difference in preventing bullying behavior.

C7. What requirements must be satisfied before a student is promoted to the next grade or level of schooling?

All students receive instruction in the four major core subjects. While great emphasis is placed on success in the core content areas, a well-rounded education is valued at ERMS. Students are required to complete two semesters of physical education and eight semesters of electives. The elective offerings come from a long list of highly enriching courses aimed at broadening the quality of each student's education. With this in mind, the promotion policy in place not only involves adequate progress in the core classes, but also requires successful completion of the elective courses and physical education.

Promotion is determined by a credit system and constant communication with parents. Of the twenty-four credits that each student has the potential to earn (one credit for every nine-week passing grade), students must earn twenty credits. Accumulation of less than twenty credits will result in remediation in the area most in need of attention, or possible retention. Attending our summer school

program is an option for students who qualify. While the retention level is extremely low, the vast majority of students successfully complete their credit requirements according to the policy.

Student advancement through the curriculum also exists through teacher recommendation, testing, and student achievement. Practices used to accomplish this include acceleration through pre-testing of classroom units, Individual Development Plans for gifted and talented students, private music lessons, publication opportunities, and easy access to technology.

D. ACTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

D1. How are your teaching practices and provided learning experiences in the school consistent with current knowledge about successful teaching and learning?

Since the opening of East Rockford Middle School in 2000, clear and high expectations have been ingrained in the school culture. District wide curriculum mapping that provides smooth transitions to the next grade level is aligned with state benchmarks. Because of positive parent support, effective teaching practices, and a positive school culture, ERMS students consistently perform above state and county averages on the MEAP. Life skills are embedded within our curriculum and encouraged in our school environment. While we are proud of our instructional practices and their results in student achievement, we believe that the foundation of our success is a school culture that is safe, caring, welcoming, and helpful. Constantly aligning our adult practices to address the unique needs of middle level learners leads to success for all students at ERMS.

Teachers at ERMS utilize a variety of instructional practices learned through professional development opportunities, such as college courses, district in-service opportunities, mentorship programs, subject area state sponsored conferences, and collegial input. We use Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences to guide our sixth grade magnet program (C6). Each child is given a multiple intelligence survey and is placed on a teaching team that aligns most closely to their favorable learning style (C6). All ERMS teachers have been trained in the SIM (C4) allowing them to implement various learning strategies in the classroom. One SIM example, the paraphrasing strategy, has improved the ability of the student population to better comprehend text across the curriculum. A second example designed to assist students with test taking strategies is called "PIRATES" and is taught to every sixth grade student. A third example of using the SIM to better educate our students occurs within the special education classrooms by using sentence and paragraph writing strategies.

All language arts teachers have been trained in the Six Traits of Writing by Julia Reynolds and incorporate this strategy to teach process writing. Math teachers incorporate technology into their curriculum with WebQuest assignments that require students to apply content from the classroom to real life experiences, like planning a budget for a family vacation. ERMS offers a gifted and talented program in all core subject areas to provide increased challenges to students that have been identified as high achieving academic students.

Through inservices, teachers become knowledgeable about how to identify students' individual learning needs and to differentiate instruction. Because we understand the needs of middle school learners, cooperative learning is practiced in classrooms throughout the building. For example, in the science curriculum scientific investigations require students to work cooperatively in groups and write collaborative lab reports. Eighth grade science teachers provide students with a "Roller Coaster Design" lab activity in which students must work in groups to apply their knowledge of gravity and problem solving skills to build a roller coaster.

Teachers design their classrooms and instruction to address all learning styles, and provide a welcoming atmosphere by using a variety of seating arrangements and engaging lesson plans. Teachers engage students in developing a voice regarding their learning through incorporating opportunities to choose projects in elective classes, novel selections in language arts, and group projects in social studies. History Alive, Hands on Geography, Math Manipulative Learning, Math-On-Line, and other examples of curriculum enhancement programs provide each student with effective learning opportunities.

D2. In what ways do teaching practices support student-initiated learning?

Throughout our school you will observe teachers involving students in a variety of learning activities that actively engage them in their learning process. Our students use school supplied daily

planners to organize assignments and manage their time. Students in language arts classes will select from various literary novels to develop their reading and writing skills, and engage in peer revision/editing, literature circles, investigation groups, cooperative group work, and student directed projects. For example, students may choose to write their own group proposal paper outlining the focus and purpose of their investigation into a modern day issue, such as the challenge ethnic groups face in America.

Social studies students engage in group projects emphasizing the understanding of core democratic values. Mock trials designed around the issues leading up to the Civil War are organized and performed by eighth grade students.

Our students have clear expectations for working successfully in cooperative groups. Teachers frequently use rubrics to increase student understanding of expected behavior while working in groups. Students at ERMS are constantly engaged in activities that polish their collaborative skills. For example, our students know how to “think, pair, and share”; band students work in small ensembles to assist peers; science students use problem solving in lab groups; drama and fine arts students create performances; and sixth grade students will lead parent conferences.

Students in our elective classes have many opportunities to be involved in their learning. Our physical education students understand that lifetime fitness is much more important than competition, and they engage in cardiovascular development each day through various high energy activities. Life skill development is featured throughout our elective curriculum. Students in our Life Management classes learn childcare through a flour sack baby project in which they have to care for their infant around the clock for one week. Woodworking students understand the necessity for safety while developing their organization and creative skills through semester projects. Journalism students conduct interviews for the school newspaper, both within our school and in the surrounding community to report on events relevant to our student population. Several classrooms host speakers that were invited by students to enhance their project or presentation. Special education students are involved in life skill development through operating a school store, managing a Card Shop business, and participating in a work skills program. Instrumental and vocal music students engage in both large and small group public performances. All ERMS students use technology as a learning tool across the curriculum and are educated on the proper use of both equipment and the Internet. We have technology objectives in word processing, key boarding, software use, multi-media production, Internet use, desktop publishing, PowerPoint creation, and web site evaluation embedded throughout our curriculum.

D3. How are resources made available to teachers and students for gathering information and sharing the results of their efforts?

East Rockford Library Information Services is committed to preparing members of our school community to become independent, lifelong learners in a changing society. Our Information Literacy Curriculum is designed to teach access to, evaluation of, and appropriate use of information from a variety of sources for problem solving, decision making, and research.

Our library is the largest classroom in the ERMS building. We service every staff member, student, and parent in our community. East has an open library with a flexible schedule. We are open from 7:00 am to 3:30 pm each day. Each morning before school approximately eighty students use the library for reading and working on school projects.

Teachers assign their classes to do research with both print and non-print resources. During the year 2004-2005, over 930 classes scheduled the library for instructional support. We also have classes sign up to listen to book talks and to check out books for their reading pleasure.

We provide our students and staff “Access Anytime, Anywhere”, by using our library web page <http://www.rockfordschool.org/erms/library>. The web page enables the students, staff, and community to access library services at all hours. Our students accessed the East Library Web page over 14,915 times during the 2004-05 school year. For the month of October 2005, the East web page had over 1,700 visitors; seventy percent were between the hours of 3:00-9:00 pm, with fifty percent of that from 3:00-6:00 pm. This shows that the students are using our online databases for homework after school.

The library site is linked to Grolier, an online encyclopedia resource which is a subscription paid for by the library budget. It has over 10,600 encyclopedia articles for students to research, as well as over 133,000 periodicals. The library page is linked to databases and resources applied by Access Michigan, a service of the Library of Michigan. These resources range from databases appropriate for elementary students to college level databases. The Library Media Specialist teaches students how to use the on-line databases and collaborates with teachers on what resources to use for each research project.

East Rockford Middle School has developed E-Book collections that are available through the web page. This on-line book collection allows students and staff access to books ordered for their school, and over 3,400 books provided from Access Michigan.

Reading is the heart of education. The library staff's objective is to create lifetime readers and graduates who continue to read and educate themselves throughout their adult lives. Our sixth grade teachers schedule their students weekly to check out library materials. Our seventh and eighth grade language arts teachers bring their classes to the library for checking out books on bi-weekly rotations, and 53% of the students come in each week to check out books for research and pleasure reading.

The library's collection of printed materials consists of 11,072 items. During the 2004-05 school year we circulated 11,024 books. The year East Rockford opened our circulation was 3,189. We have increased circulation by three times in five years of operation.

Each year the Library Services staff offers programs to encourage reading. The Library Media Specialist gives quarterly book talks for the language arts classes. We participate in the district wide "March is Reading Month" program. Along with a Summer Reading Club, the library sponsors a Breakfast Book Club. The students pick a book they would like to read and once a month we meet before school and discuss the book. The Library Media Specialist and two language arts teachers help with questions to keep the discussion moving. Each student is given the book for his or her participation. The student council provides the funds to purchase the books.

The Library Services Department provides a Media Retrieval System to our staff. The Media Retrieval System has three components: Live feeds (National educational channels), encoded videos, and videos on demand through Untied Streaming. The scheduling component of the Media Retrieval gives teachers the opportunity to view the 3,500 videos, which the district owns. United Streaming is the largest online, multimedia library of educational videos and images, appropriate for every age and learning level, correlated to state standards, and searchable by keyword, subject, topic, grade, and curriculum standard. Using United Streaming has been scientifically proven to raise students' test scores.

D4. What technology applications is the school using? How do they relate to the curricular goals and how do they support teaching and learning?

There are two varieties of technology applications used at East Rockford Middle School. The first are used for effective communication and data collection. These applications include GroupWise for email and calendaring, Skyward Educator Access for attendance and student information, Grade Quick for grading, and the Microsoft Office applications, including Word, PowerPoint, Excel, PhotoDraw and FrontPage. Family Access software is offered to all families in the district to monitor student grades, lunch accounts, and other vital information through the Internet. All of these software applications organize and hasten communication, effectively allowing more time for direct instruction with students.

The second kind of application directly impacts the curricular goals of the Rockford school district. These applications were chosen by teachers and instructional technology consultants to directly meet the required technology benchmarks the State of Michigan has set for middle schools. All teachers have a list of technology benchmarks they are expected to meet each year at their grade level, and within their content area. There are accountability checklists that list the technology benchmarks, and a section for teachers to explain how and when they met each objective in their curricular area. These are turned into the building principal at the end of each school year.

The philosophy carried through training of staff and the purchasing of technology is that teachers do not teach students how to use machines, but rather teachers teach students curriculum using the machines to deliver instruction in the most effective manner possible. Curricular technology applications are purchased only if they can be used to integrate Michigan Standards and Benchmarks into the

classroom. A specific example would include purchasing Math Mystery Fractions, Math Heads, Astro Algebra, and Number Heroes software to meet the sixth grade level objectives for teaching math.

Each grade level has more than thirty technology applications available to them. These software applications cover all curricular areas including math, science, social studies, language arts, and several technology education courses. Other technology applications include current subscriptions to educational web sites for teachers to use, such as Edhelper.com and United Streaming. All software applications are available in all computer labs, in the media center, and on teacher stations in each classroom. The Graphic Interactive System for Teaching (GIST) software is used by teachers to create unit and course organizers. GIST is a valuable tool that assists with our curriculum mapping process.

All teachers have had required technology training in the past five years. There was an active Instructional Technology department from 2001-2003 with a director and teacher consultants who provided training to all staff members throughout the year. All new teachers attend mandatory technology training prior to the start of the school year, which includes a class on software integration training specifically focusing on the use of software to meet curricular goals and objectives. Each school in Rockford had a "floating" technology day once a year for technology training in 2001 and 2002. All staff were given opportunities for technology training in Internet research, web site evaluation, software integration, web page design, video production, and much more.

Two hundred and twenty-five workstations are available at ERMS. Two PC labs and one Mac lab are open for all staff to use, as well as technology education labs that are available certain hours each day when they are not being used for elective classes. The library also has 17 stations for students to use before, during, and after school. Teachers also schedule the library to use the computers for research. Each classroom is equipped with a teacher's station, dual monitors, a 17" and a 34", for student viewing, dual audio cards, and a web camera with IP telephony. Our network is a private fiber gigabit Ethernet network with 100 megabit switching to the desktop. It is a fully converged network, meaning that all voice, video, and data run over the same wire.

There are two video production carts that are mobile and can be used throughout the school for various classroom projects. There is also a TV studio in the library which teachers use with their classrooms for projects and presentations. Several digital cameras are available for checkout in the media center and are used frequently by staff for classroom projects and presentations.

Technology is an ongoing opportunity for students after school as well. All eighth graders prepare a career interest profile through the Michigan Occupational Information System (MOIS) (C1). Classes have been offered on the use of digital cameras, the use of iMovie for video production, and the creation of web pages. These classes are offered to all students in the middle school.

Channeling communication through our web page is of great importance to the staff and administration of East Rockford Middle School. The school web page can be found at <http://www.rockfordschools.org/erms/>. It is a great source of information for parents and community members and is updated frequently. Commonly used forms, calendars, policies, school newsletters, upcoming events, sports and intramural opportunities, and more can be found at this central location. Another key focus of web page use for parents is the ability to check daily student homework assignments. As of 2005, it is mandatory for all ERMS staff to have their homework online for parents to view daily. Many teachers create their own classroom web sites or use the district created homework links.

E. PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY

E1. What opportunities do teachers and other staff have to build professional community that enhances their collective capacity to work together to support student learning?

At ERMS we embrace lifelong learning as a necessity for successful teaching. All of our teachers exceed the staff development hours required of their profession and are highly qualified, according to the criteria established by the federal "No Child Left Behind" legislation. In addition, our district provides an elaborate four-day new teacher orientation process that educates new employees about the expectations and standards existing in Rockford Public Schools. Eighty-five percent of our teaching staff currently possess a Masters degree, or are in the process of working toward the degree. Through our North Central

Association Performance Accreditation process, the East Rockford Middle School staff identified SIM (C4) training as a staff development goal. The SIM focuses on classroom instructional strategies and student assessment. As a result, the district supported our teacher consultant, Kirsten Myers, to be trained in Arizona to serve as our district trainer for the SIM. All teachers at East Rockford Middle School have been, and will be, trained in the components of the SIM.

Our staff collectively identified school improvement goals in reading, writing, and problem solving. Through this collaboration, we now have improved school wide strategies for reading (RAP), problem solving (POWER), and writing (TSC). All of our classrooms have charts and posters focusing on these strategies.

East Rockford Middle School is blessed to have a Citizenship Committee consisting of a diverse group of educators who work with students and parents to address the importance of respecting and accepting others. Through the work of this group, we now have a school wide campaign to address bullying behaviors. This committee has also been directly responsible for bringing in various speakers for staff, students, and parents to create awareness and action in the area of respecting others (C6). Our Student Assistance Team (SAT) meets weekly and works collaboratively with staff regarding decisions and actions involving the education of all students in our building (A2).

Through the leadership of our building administration, a positive and cooperative culture for decision-making exists within our building. All shareholders understand the importance of their involvement in the effective operation of our school. Through BIT we have established a procedure for making school wide decisions. The format is simple but effective. It allows input from all staff in an efficient manner. Membership on our BIT is determined by a teacher's planning period. We will have six teams in our building with each selecting a leader to meet with the building administration. The BIT leaders and the building principal compile information from the meetings and communicate with the entire staff, usually through staff meetings.

We have six staff development days incorporated into our school calendar, and our staff will collaboratively plan these days. The staff also coordinates this planning with their middle school colleagues at North Rockford Middle School, the district's other middle school. The collaborative effort of middle school educators in our district has influenced the district's decision to train all Rockford Public Schools' staff in Professional Learning Communities (PLC). A team of educators from ERMS will be trained in February 2006.

E2. How does a coherent approach to professional development for teachers and other staff ensure their ability to implement effectively the school's curriculum, instructional strategies, and support system? How do organizational arrangements, such as time and teaching assignments, and school norms and culture, make professional development a priority?

East Rockford Middle School and Rockford Public Schools believe strongly in aligning staff development with best practices to better enhance the learning opportunities of our students. Increased student achievement scores, and comments on staff, student, and parent perceiver indicators (RAMS VI) (G3) show that continuous professional development positively impacts teaching and learning at ERMS. Focusing on staff development that aligns with our building goals has greatly assisted us in times of financial struggle in our district.

Our North Central Association school improvement goals continue to drive staff development planning. As a result, our staff collaboratively identified training in the SIM strategies as being the most significant means of accomplishing our goals for increasing student achievement in reading, writing, and problem solving. Standardized assessment (MEAP) and local assessments have supported a positive connection between our teacher training and student achievement.

On-going K-12 curriculum alignment and articulation is a priority in our district. Time, resources, and guidance have been provided for staff to work with colleagues to strengthen our curriculum planning and delivery. Our teachers have been actively involved in a curriculum review process resulting in developing maps for each subject area taught. Through this curriculum mapping process, teachers have worked collaboratively with our fellow colleagues at North Rockford Middle School to ensure curriculum alignment exists for all students. During in-service days teachers received

training in curriculum mapping design by Regis McCord, an in-state education consultant, and in instruction design and developing student assessments with nationally known education consultant, Marian Leibowitz. Kent Intermediate School District personnel provided training in aligning our state benchmarks and standards on our maps.

Organizational arrangements, such as shared lunch hours for departments and shared teacher planning times, ensure a set time where ideas can be exchanged and communication can take place. Staff in-service days and BIT also give each individual in the building time to communicate and work collectively toward our common goals. Department heads, the NCA steering committee, and our SAT team meet regularly to focus on student achievement.

Monthly staff meetings afford us the opportunity to devote time for staff development. Sue Bakita, District Teacher Mentor Coordinator (instruction, mentoring), Bob Goethal, District Security Director (school safety), Cindy Kitzrow, District Media Specialist (web training), and Dr. Michael Shibley, Superintendent of Rockford Public Schools (school finance, state legislation initiatives) are frequent presenters at staff meetings. Skilled educators on staff at ERMS, employed by the district or associated with our ISD, have provided training in such areas as Six Traits of Writing, grade level technology objectives, effective instruction, classroom management, web use, special education law, and cooperative learning. Several staff members have been trained in “Schools Attuned”, a program on brain based research designed by Dr. Mel Levine. All staff have received emergency training in Code Red (lock-down) and Code Yellow (evacuation) safety procedures. Coaches, club advisors, administrators, and support staff are trained in heart defibrillator use. Ad hoc committees consisting of teachers, administrators, students, parents, and support staff have formed to discuss several school issues such as student code of conduct, activity planning, scheduling of MEAP, and fundraising.

Our staff also obtains training through their professional organizations, college education programs, and for specific curriculum needs, such as reproductive health. Our district values teacher training and lifelong learning by reimbursing three college credits per year for all staff. In collaboration with our parent organizations and with financial support from the Rockford Education Foundation, our district has hosted national speakers on important topics such as diversity, effective parenting, and anger-management/conflict resolution.

E3. How does the school tailor professional development and support to address the differences in career experience or professional responsibility?

To provide a welcoming orientation to ERMS, beginning and newly hired teachers are assigned a volunteer mentor within the same department who supports and assists them for four continuous years. The district employs a teacher mentor coordinator who provides training and support for the mentors and teachers. The coordinator assists new teachers in classroom instruction and management. All beginning and new teachers attend a minimum of four days of professional development prior to the start of the school year, which includes the school curriculum, adopted instructional strategies, use of technology, and current district policies and procedures.

All teachers choose three to five professional goals each year to enhance their effectiveness in the classroom. Administrative support is given to teachers to assist them in goal development and achievement. Observation by administrators is an ongoing part of the evaluation/supervision process. All teachers are evaluated both formally and informally on a rotating schedule. Pre and post meetings with teacher and administrator allow for input and clarification.

Professional Development opportunities are thoroughly communicated through the district. Staff is encouraged to investigate and search for opportunities to renew, revitalize, and grow as educators. Teachers attend discipline area conferences such as Michigan Science Teachers Association (MSTA), and Michigan Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (MAHPERD). ERMS teachers have attended Michigan Association of Middle School Educators (MAMSE) and Michigan Schools in the Middle (MSDE) sponsored workshops on effective teaming, age appropriate instruction, and learning styles. The Rockford Education Foundation (REF) provides opportunities and grants to bring new curriculum and ideas into the classroom. A strong core of staff members has also enrolled and

completed Rockford's Leadership Academy. This program is not only geared for aspiring administrators, but also for individuals who want to strengthen their leadership abilities.

Training for our support staff strengthens their skills at meeting the unique needs associated with middle school students. Our district provides yearly training for secretaries (accounting, student records, public relations), custodians (safety, cleaning procedures, CPR), and support staff (CPI, Autism Spectrum Disorder). Food service staff has yearly training on state and federal guidelines associated with the USDA. Rockford Schools employs their own food service director who meets monthly with our food service staff regarding food preparation and serving.

E4. How does the school use the processes and results of student assessment, staff evaluation, and school review to support professional growth? How has teacher professional development improved teaching and resulted in higher student achievement and success?

At East Rockford Middle School, student achievement is monitored through data collected from in-house assessments in reading, writing, and problem solving; yearly MEAP scores; student academic grades; and teacher observations in the classroom. Department heads are directly involved in reviewing specific content area achievement data. They work with their departmental colleagues to identify intervention strategies to improve student achievement. Our staff development is aligned with the intervention strategies identified by staff. For example, our language arts teachers assessed our eighth graders in paragraph writing using an internally developed rubric focusing on topic sentence, supporting sentences, and conclusion sentences. Results indicated that our students scored low in writing an organized paragraph. Our language arts teachers and the NCA writing committee collaborated and developed classroom strategies to assist students in paragraph writing. Our teachers received training in the SIM, and the Six Traits of Writing. We have witnessed increases in student writing scores both on the MEAP, and on our writing rubrics.

Rockford Public Schools employs a common teacher evaluation tool that was developed collaboratively by teachers, administrators, parents, and board members. The model is based on effective teaching research in the domains of planning/preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. Non-tenured teachers are observed in the classroom four times a year with two summative evaluations written per year. This process occurs for the first four years of their teaching. Tenured professional staff, evaluated every third year, will be observed in the classroom twice a year with one summative evaluation written. Teacher evaluations are the responsibility of building administration. Classroom observations involve pre and post visitation meetings that are based on effective classroom teaching research and cognitive coaching research. Summative evaluation meetings involve the use of the district evaluation tool and are structured to engage in common dialogue between the evaluator and the person being evaluated. All teacher evaluations are read by central office administrators who provide a feedback card to the building principal.

Each employee of the district submits yearly professional goals to their supervisor. These goals are reviewed early in the year between the teacher and supervisor. The identified goals provide each employee the opportunity to grow professionally in the area they identify. The supervisor has the opportunity to support the teacher/employee in reaching these goals. Professional development opportunities are identified from these goals.

F. LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATIONAL VITALITY

F1. How does leadership move the school toward its vision/mission? How is the instructional leadership role defined and implemented? How are resources aligned with goals?

The relationship between the staff and administration is extremely positive. Our building principal sets the tone of our building by modeling cooperation and collaboration. He maintains a focus on student achievement through his guidance and participation, working directly with department heads, NCA steering committees, parent committees, and district administration teams. A strong student advocate, our principal constantly gauges his actions by what is best for students. He works to ensure that both time and financial resources are provided to meet the goals defined by the building. These efforts have resulted in extra staff training days, staff attendance at conferences, and department collaboration time for curriculum mapping work.

Each year all Rockford building administrators participate in a retreat with the Board of Education. The retreat is dedicated to maintaining a focus on the district's vision and goals for the ensuing school year. The retreat also serves to develop camaraderie and collegiality with the administrative team and Board of Education.

Building administrators work closely as a team communicating and modeling building expectations through their constant visibility, advocacy for middle school education, and active involvement in all phases of our school. Building administrators at ERMS are active, approachable, and seek input and involvement in decisions regarding our school. This positive relationship has created an environment in which all staff have a voice. Decisions are made collectively, leading to active staff participation in many ad hoc committees that support the positive and effective education of our students. Many successful practices existing at our school are a result of staff collaboration. Student handbook issues, hallway supervision, bus duty, in-school suspension guidelines, Apple Awards, student recognition programs, grading policy, staff development, departmental budget allocations, and many other important operational issues that define our school climate are examples.

Leadership works actively with department heads and BIT to facilitate content area decisions and reach our building goals. Curriculum mapping, staff development (SIM, Six Traits), textbook adoption, thematic instruction (bullying), curriculum embedded life skills, and common assessment development are examples of collaboration that have promoted learning. Through BIT, decisions on school climate and building budget issues have been collectively designed. Our NCA process also engages all staff in collaborative decision-making and goal attainment.

F2. How does the school engage its internal and external stakeholders in leadership and decision-making? What is the relationship between the principal and stakeholders?

With a strong commitment to collaboration, decisions at East Rockford Middle School are made collectively with input from all stakeholders. The building principal supports and strongly values the involvement of staff, students, and parents.

The NCA (C1) process engages our staff with collaborative dialogue concerning school improvement goals. The NCA Steering Committee, consisting of the principal, assistant principal, teachers, media specialist, and support staff, guides our school improvement goals through constant communication with building committees. The steering committee ensures that all staff has input into school improvement decisions. Staff development training (Six Traits, SIM) is generated through our NCA Steering Committee.

Our department heads provide excellent leadership for their departmental colleagues and facilitate the ERMS curriculum mapping (C1) process. They meet monthly with the building principal and their colleagues to discuss curriculum issues and student achievement.

Staff and teachers are also involved in building decision making through Building Improvement Teams (BIT) (E1). The BIT process is an effective and efficient avenue for generating input from all staff. We assimilate information from BIT for presentation and discussion at monthly staff meetings. Through BIT each staff member has the opportunity for input and discussion. We used the BIT process to apply for Blue Ribbon School recognition.

RAMS (Rockford's Action Model for Success) (G1, H2) is developed from a survey of students, parents, and staff throughout the district. The results of this survey are utilized at ERMS and throughout the district to develop school improvement goals.

The principal, assistant principal, and staff advisors work directly with students to engage their involvement in decisions concerning school. We have a very active student council that plans many student activities for the year, establishes fund raising opportunities, manages their council budget, communicates to their peers, and provides the manpower to ensure activities are successful. Our National Junior Honor Society provides much leadership in tutoring peers and volunteering their time throughout the building, district, and community. Our building administrators are student advocates, approachable, highly visible in the hallways, frequent visitors in the classroom, and viewed by students as caring adults who will listen. The assistant principal visits all sixth grade classrooms at the beginning of the semester to discuss school policy and gather input on how they have been welcomed at ERMS. Our activities

coordinator provides opportunities for our students to determine what intramural and after school activities they would like to participate in. Examples of such activities are skateboarding at a local skate zone, snow football against the teachers, and guitar jam.

The building principal meets with our Parent Advisory Council (PAC) (G2) each month to provide parents with an opportunity to give input, gather information, and be actively involved in our school.

F3. What kind of participatory school improvement process operates at the school? How did the school prepare its Self-Assessment for the Blue Ribbon Schools Program, and how did this initiative relate to other school improvement and planning efforts?

Our school improvement process is based on collaboration and collective decision making. BIT and the NCA Performance Accreditation School Improvement Model allow us the avenue to establish and reach our school goals. Through our school improvement efforts we have seen student achievement increases in writing and problem solving as reflected on the science MEAP (Appendix V). Along with the academic improvements, we have witnessed an overall improvement in school climate (B4) and have implemented an all school anti-bullying campaign (C6). Our mapping process (C1) provides curriculum consistency and serves as a foundation for all curriculum decisions. Our school improvement efforts have allowed us to establish the SIM (E1) as a staff development model to enhance teaching and learning. Continuous evaluation and monitoring of our school improvement goals, student intervention programs, curriculum mapping process, and staff development needs are a necessary part of our journey.

With the participatory and collaborative philosophy established as the foundation for how we make decisions, it was natural for our staff to make the commitment to seek Blue Ribbon School status. We feel we have an outstanding school and believe strongly in continuous growth and development. We view the Blue Ribbon process as an opportunity to assess our school, validate our efforts, and provide support and further guidance for our school improvement journey. We are fortunate in that many of our staff have gone through the process with other buildings in our district. The input and guidance from these individuals assisted greatly in gathering the commitment of all staff in our building. Other schools in Rockford have gained Blue Ribbon status and provided assistance with our decision to apply.

Our Blue Ribbon steering committee consists of teachers, counselors, a media specialist, and administrators. The steering committee members have the responsibility of writing the report. Through the guidance of this committee, all staff have been involved in Blue Ribbon, discussing and gathering information for the application. Through BIT and staff work during in-service days, the committee has gathered written data from all staff. Our steering committee visited with Mr. David Mills of the Michigan Department of Education. We have an established time line that involves staff, parents, district administration, and board members serving as readers of the report.

F4. How does the school leadership use the most current information about education to promote continuous improvement in the school? How does such evidence influence decision-making?

Our principal and assistant principal maintain a focus on meeting the needs of each child through their dedicated promotion of middle school education. Both are members of state and national middle school associations and have attended conferences on middle school concepts, professional learning communities, staff supervision models, curriculum mapping, MEAP strategies, diversity training, school climate issues, and NCLB initiatives. Our administrators are active members of the district administrative team. They work collaboratively on addressing district issues such as school finance reform, development of RAMS VI, and various school wide improvement committees. Both administrators promote middle school education to parents through the PAC (G2), newsletters, our building website, and frequent phone communications.

Throughout our building you will see teachers applying best practices in the classroom as a result of staff development training supported by our principals. Our principals team with department heads to analyze standardized test data and internal assessment data. Decisions about staff development, teacher collaboration time, allocation of resources, and curriculum needs are established through these efforts. Adopting the SIM (E1) as a strategy to improve student academic success resulted from principal and department head collaboration. The assistant principal works directly with the SAT (A2) to analyze

student data in the areas of attendance, discipline, grades, and student success plans. The Tools class, anti-bullying campaign, and changes in the student code of conduct resulted from the assistant principal and SAT collaborating.

F5. Reflecting on the last five years, what conditions or changes have contributed most to the overall success of the school?

First of all, the rare, creative opportunity to “grow” a school from the ground up sparked a successful beginning. Our facilities and surrounding grounds are amazingly beautiful, and both inspire success. With an enormous pool of applicants to draw from, our district gleans its faculty and administrators from the “best of the best”. Secondly, our faculty came together from two separate sources, a sixth grade building and a separate seventh and eighth grade middle school, with a firm commitment to blend into a new, dynamic whole. We continue to respect and appreciate each other. We enjoy a genuine atmosphere of camaraderie and mutual support.

Another important factor in our success is the high quality of our students who come from supportive families ready to learn. Our district and the Rockford community expect, support, and celebrate our high academic achievement. In short, everyone is genuinely “Ram Proud”.

Teachers stay current in the latest best teaching methods and curricula. Because we only have one curriculum director for our entire district, our teachers, by necessity, are a vital force in curriculum development. During the past four years, grades 6-12 have been collaboratively working to identify and connect curriculum through mapping. The continuation of this process has made the academic transitions for students to the next grade level smooth and efficient.

Our superintendent has established open lines of communication with every employee in the district and he frequently calls upon all of us to help solve problems and create new paradigms for success. He has eradicated the old top-down scheme of management and has created a true teamwork model in our district. We know our input is desired, valued, and implemented. Most importantly, all stakeholders in our district, teachers, parents, students, and administrators, trust each other.

We have a supportive and actively involved board of education that has facilitated the passage of a Parks and Recreation millage, and a Special Education millage within the last three years that afforded us the opportunity to avoid teacher layoffs and program cuts because of decreased revenue from the state.

F6. How has the school-integrated technology to improve management and program efficiency and effectiveness?

ERMS has integrated many technology applications for effective communication and data collection. These applications include GroupWise for email and calendaring, Skyward Educator Access for attendance and student information, Grade Quick for grading, and numerous Microsoft Office applications. These software applications organize and hasten communication, effectively allowing more time for direct instruction with students.

A Family Access program is offered to all families in the district. This program allows parents to access their child’s school records from their home using the Internet.

Each new teacher is given three days of training on technology applications they will use for classroom management. The Media Specialist trains new teachers regarding how to use the library web page for research and the district’s Media Retrieval system.

The district has set up a database to develop and analyze MEAP data. The data is broken up into several categories such as subject areas, grade levels, gender, and year-by-year comparisons. Our NCA teams have used this data for school improvement. It also shows the areas of strengths and weaknesses in our curriculum. We use this data to analyze what is working for our students and what needs to be changed.

F7. What are the major educational challenges the school must face over the next five years, and how does the school plan to address them?

A major challenge our school faces in the next five years is the continuously changing status of school finance in the state and the impact it has on a growing district like Rockford. We are fortunate to have a superintendent who understands this impact and puts forth much effort to create legislative change to address such matters. We also have a board of education and community that supports a quality

education for our students. Our district has a continuous school improvement plan (RAMS), updated every three years, that is formulated from the input of all stakeholders in the district. Along with other major areas for continuous growth, school finance stability is a district goal. Regardless of our finance situation, ERMS will continue to provide an age appropriate curriculum that fosters student growth, both cognitively and affectively.

We also recognize that our school will need to address the needs of a more diverse learning population, especially with students who have severe special needs. Our regular education classroom teachers are being identified through special education law as having more responsibility for the education of special education students. At ERMS our special education teachers work collaboratively with regular education teachers to establish education plans for our special needs students. Also, the district recently hired an additional administrator to work specifically with middle school special education.

Additionally, NCLB legislation requires schools to be more data-driven in making decisions about educating our students. We accept the challenge to continue improving our standardized test scores, and to continue our work establishing common assessments in all core areas. To help with this mission, we will be training our staff in Professional Learning Communities. A team of ERMS educators will be going to Scottsdale, Arizona in February 2006 to begin this training.

G. SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

G1. What are the goals and priorities of the school, family, and community partnerships? How have the school and community both improved as a result of these partnerships, and how did the school measure the improvements?

Our district logo contains the following: “Rockford Public Schools: A Tradition of Excellence – Quality Community, Quality Schools”. Printed on all district communications, this phrase very clearly states the value placed on community involvement in our district and at ERMS. We know that involvement by parents and community is crucial to maximizing student success. Acknowledging this, a major goal is to involve parents and the Rockford community at large in the education of our students. Academically, socially, athletically, and musically the Rockford community does this well.

Parents are surveyed every three years to help determine family and student needs. The results of this survey are published in a document called RAMS (Rockford’s Action Model for Success) (H2). The goals and objectives published in this document are a direct result of this survey and are used at the building and district levels to meet student and family needs.

Our VIE (Volunteers in Education) program is a strong component of our learning community. The VIE program invites parents to involve themselves in a variety of school related activities, such as chaperoning dances, assisting teachers, and attending field trips. This year, approximately 175 households applied for security clearance so that they might volunteer in a variety of school related capacities. The Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), open to all parents, meets once per month with the school administration and counseling staff. These meetings are held to keep parents informed, answer any questions they might have, and discuss relevant topics. Parents are utilized to teach a variety of after school enrichment activities, and also are included as guest speakers about career related topics.

The close connection between ERMS and the Rockford community is evidenced by community influence in our building and student influence in our community. Representatives from the community are frequently seen in the building bringing their expertise into our school to enrich and support the curriculum. Police officers come into the school to teach D.A.R.E. as well as boater and ORV safety (B4). Members of the local business community sponsor the Student of the Month program. Local Junior Achievement volunteers visit classrooms to educate students about various business operations and entrepreneurial skills. Speakers representing the Michigan United Conservation Club, DNR, DEQ, Consumers Energy, Cannon Township, and Waste Management have visited ERMS. Moms In Touch encourages and support ERMS staff through cards, snacks, and email comments. Our Outstanding Students of the Month are sponsored by two local businesses, Timbers Restaurant and Johnson Controls. As a result of community involvement, our district received the 2005 Business of the Year Award from the Rockford Chamber of Commerce.

Students also reach out to the community in a variety of ways. The Community Contact Club has provided the opportunity for many students to involve themselves with many community service activities. Staff and students have participated in community outreach activities such as Relay for Life, Hurricane Katrina relief efforts, Toys for Tots, the ERMS Adopt-a-Family Program, a coat drive, Craft Kits for DeVos Children's Hospital, Jump Rope for Heart, and National Honor Society Community Service/Fundraisers.

G2. How does the school involve families in their children's education?

East Rockford Middle School encourages and values parental involvement. We have a very approachable staff and administration at ERMS who seek and welcome parent involvement. At ERMS we provide a very thorough parent/student orientation program that engages parents in their child's overall education (A3). Attendance at our fall parent orientation is ninety-eight percent. We also host an Open House at the start of each school year for parents to meet teachers and view curriculum materials. Parents are able to walk through their student's schedule and hear a ten-minute presentation in each of their classes. Teachers cover classroom expectations, homework policies, grading procedures, and share with parents the most effective ways to communicate with them. Progress reports are sent home midway through each marking period. Parent teacher conferences are held in the fall and spring with a parent attendance rate of eighty-eight percent.

We spend time coaching and encouraging parents to communicate with staff. Discussions are held at orientations about how to communicate with staff via email and voicemail. Parents are encouraged to access the district and school website where they can find pertinent information regarding homework assignments and upcoming projects for each class. Many teachers in our building have their own parent newsletter. Teachers post their homework on the web. Via our Family Access program on the Internet, parents are able to monitor student grades, lunch accounts, and other vital information.

Meetings with teachers, parents, and students, called "staffings", are held frequently at ERMS. Staffings are held to discuss student progress, offer parents a chance to ask questions, and help provide support to families when they have concerns. Tutoring services are available to families either through the ERMS or high school National Honor Societies.

Monthly newsletters are mailed to every family with information regarding academics, school climate, co-curricular activities, and other items pertinent to our school community. Included in this newsletter is a featured insert called "Parents STILL Make the Difference", which contains articles relevant to the parents of middle school students. We also include ERMS information with the district monthly newsletter, The Rampage, which is sent to every household in the community.

As new families enroll in the district, individual appointments are scheduled with counselors. Each family is provided an orientation packet and a welcome package from the community of Rockford. We contact a student's previous district to make sure that special placements, such as gifted and talented and special education, are made appropriately. Counselors and administrators meet with all new transfer students by grade level within the first week of school to introduce students to the counseling staff, allow them the chance to meet and support each other, and assist them with their transition into the building.

Our Volunteers In Education (VIE) program is a group of parent volunteers that assists with school functions and activities throughout the year. This group averages 200 parents a year and is coordinated by a parent at each grade level. This program is open to all parents.

We schedule monthly Parent Advisory Council (PAC) meetings open to all parents. The PAC is an avenue to engage parents in discussion about school related issues. These well attended meetings offer valuable insights to parents, enabling them to give input to the principal, vice principal, and athletic/student activities director. We select a parent representative from our PAC to serve on the district Inter-School Council, a committee of parents who meet with the superintendent regarding district communication. The PAC provides our parents an opportunity to assist us with decisions regarding school operations. For example, parents from our PAC addressed the issue of fingerprinting for all parent volunteers in our school. As a result of their efforts and involvement, we now have a district policy/process requiring all volunteers to have a criminal history check.

G3. How does the school support the needs and concerns of families?

ERMS is staffed with two counselors, a social worker, a school psychologist, and a speech therapist. These staff members provide support for students in the classroom during the school day, and maintain direct contact with many of the families at ERMS who are in need of assistance. These individuals will often make and coordinate referrals to outside agencies so that families can have direct access to the help that they need (i.e. the local community service center which provides a variety of services such as food, clothing, help with utility bills, assistance with shelter, and counseling services). Numerous referrals for assistance come directly from home, and sometimes indirectly through the classroom teacher. Along with administration, these individuals also serve on the Student Assistance Team, which serves as a clearinghouse for many of the student and family concerns, and also coordinates referrals to outside resources. Our school social worker has developed an after school tutoring/homework program conducted at a local apartment complex which houses several of our students.

Every year, the counseling office makes several brochures available to parents and students. The United Way publishes a guide to family resources for the entire county. These guides are made available to families on an individual basis and are also put out for parents during Parent Teacher Conferences. In the sixth grade, conference appointments are set up with each family and are documented by individual mailings. If families are not able to attend conferences, individual times are set up for either an in-school meeting, or a conference over the phone.

Staff maintains close contact with the health care aide in the building. This person also utilizes the district's nurse as a valuable resource to help deal with student health concerns. To ensure that students' health needs are met, the building's health care aide is highly involved in maintaining close communication with parents and family health care providers. The kitchen staff at ERMS communicates closely with administration and support staff when there are concerns about student nutrition and a family's ability to help provide for proper nutrition. Confidential referrals are made to the counseling office when families may be in need of enrolling for the free/reduced lunch program. The kitchen at ERMS also runs a breakfast program for all students prior to school each day.

While there are numerous examples of projects that are taken on by individual classrooms, the counseling office coordinates a large share of the effort. Throughout the year, the counseling department sponsors fundraising luncheons. These luncheons are supported enthusiastically and the staff contributes generously to support these worthy causes. They also coordinate various food and donation drives for local service centers.

As teaching and support staffs communicate closely regarding students and families, referrals are also made to the holiday Adopt a Family program, which is coordinated through the counseling office. In an effort to make Christmas more enjoyable for some of our less fortunate families, staff and students pool their efforts and resources to purchase food, gift cards, and gifts for those in need. Staff members donate numerous items to be used as gifts from which students could choose as they do their "Christmas shopping" here at school. Also, food and household items are donated by staff to supply families in need. Our student council donates money to help purchase gifts and supplies. Local businesses such as Wolverine World Wide, Meijer, Pegasus Sports, and Creative Concepts have donated, or offered items at a discount, to help support this effort. This year alone, thirty ERMS students wrapped and took home a gift for their parents or siblings, twenty-eight students received a sweatshirt or T-shirt from the staff, and twenty-eight gift cards in the amount of \$25.00 each were mailed to families to help with gift purchasing or holiday groceries.

G4. How are educational resources in the school and community used to extend learning opportunities for students, teachers and families?

East Rockford Middle School provides many positive experiences for students by offering various learning opportunities within the school and community. The administration has brought in a national speaker, Dr. Michael Fowlin, to discuss issues of race, discrimination, violence prevention, and personal identity. His presentations brought a heightened awareness of these issues to our students, faculty, administrators, and parents. As part of our Language Arts curriculum all students read the book *The Revealers* by Doug Wilhelm (C6). The students wrote and acted out plays on bullying for the entire student body. The author also came and talked to the students about bullying and the writing process.

The Conquers (a power lifting team) are a group that comes each year to talk to the students during physical education class about respect and self-esteem. Our staff and students use Camp Roger, a local nature preserve, for curriculum extension activities and team building exercises. The natural habitat of the camp lends itself to many math, science, and problem solving activities. Each grade level participates in numerous curriculum driven activities that are used to extend their learning opportunities.

Professional artists, like poet Terry Wooten and puppeteer June Stoppels, provide students with expanded learning opportunities in language arts.

Connecting learning to the real world, while associating experiences to individual learning styles, is key to our sixth grade magnet philosophy (C6). Students in the Communication/Technology magnet have the opportunity to expand their knowledge about future job opportunities through a Work-A-Day program. The students choose a career of interest, research the profession, and work with an in-the-field mentor for three days.

The Fine Arts magnet visits the Grand Rapids Civic Theater to experience all aspects “behind the scenes” for producing a major play or musical. They also attend local theatre productions as well as professional stage performances in Chicago.

The Health Quest magnet has a partnership with a local fitness center, Champion Health and Fitness. Champion’s employees work closely with the students on their own personal health plan. Students participate in a Health Career Day with Champion employees and outside guest speakers.

The Structures magnet visits areas of the greater Grand Rapids community to learn how and why different structures are built. The students then research and build structures found in the Western Hemisphere. These structure projects are built to scale and are displayed throughout our building. Students then conduct a “Significant Structures Day” for parents and community.

Our Earth Keepers magnet connects with the Earth Foundation to sell t-shirts to buy rainforest property around the world. In the last five years the magnet has saved over fifty acres of rainforest, kept over five hundred pounds of batteries and nine tons of paper from landfills, and coordinated the recycling program in our building.

Seventh and eighth graders participate with our local law enforcement agencies for the D.A.R.E. program, and boater and ORV safety programs.

Staff and students take field trips to enhance the curriculum. Students visit the Fredrick Meijer Gardens, the VanAndel Museum, and the local ISD. All eighth graders take a class trip to Cedar Point. They also have the opportunity to go on an educational tour of the Eastern U.S. at the end of the school year.

ERMS Band and Choir departments attend concerts at Rockford High School and other local and national venues. The East Rockford intramural program is also fortunate to use local bowling alleys and golf courses to hold activities. Other athletic camps and learning clinics are offered to our students throughout the summer months at Rockford High School and local colleges and universities.

East Rockford Middle School also provides its facilities to members of the community. The gymnasium and football and softball fields are used year round by the Rockford Community Services Department for youth basketball, football, soccer, and softball. The school building is used each Sunday for a local church. All these activities extend the learning opportunities for students, teachers, and families.

H. INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

H1. What is the school’s overall approach to assessment? How do the methods align with the educational vision/mission and curriculum? What questions about assessment is the school currently addressing?

At ERMS we believe that assessment guides our decisions and actions in establishing an education environment that allows our students to be successful lifelong learners. We realize how vital assessment is in the continuous improvement of curriculum design and instructional delivery. We are currently developing common assessments in all core areas as an extension of our curriculum mapping process (C1).

Through our involvement with Education YES! and No Child Left Behind, our students have demonstrated significant academic achievement. The grade of all A's, which ERMS has received through Education YES! the past two years, is based on a combination of curriculum, certification, and program design, as well as improving scores on the MEAP test. Internal assessments have also been conducted to monitor progress on the NCA goals of reading, writing, and problem solving. These assessments have helped to document that the strategies being implemented across our curriculum are producing the intended results.

An assessment is also conducted for students entering the seventh and eighth grade to determine placement in the ROCK program. While some of the selection process includes subjective information, such as teacher and parent observation, the PLAN test, with normative data based at the tenth grade level, provides the objective information to help make a more concise admission decision.

Staff utilizes different forms of assessments besides the conventional paper and pencil tests to allow for differing learning styles. Self-evaluation, dramatic and musical presentations, Powerpoints, reading logs, journals, essay and poetry contests, and group projects are some of the assessments used. The staff has adopted a unified grading scale to be used across the curriculum. Constant evaluation is being conducted and monitored every four weeks through mid-term progress reports and report cards. These reports are communicated to parents and closely monitored by the counseling office. Counselors meet with students who are falling into a pattern of low grades, are in danger of failing, or have failed. Staff also has the option of assigning an "incomplete" to a student, which will give the student an extra ten days beyond the end of each marking period to make up any missing work.

H2. How does the school use assessment results to understand and improve student and school performance? How is data used to influence decision-making?

For ERMS, the MEAP test has provided valuable data that has been used for curriculum development and assessment of student performance. Teachers utilize individual student test results to guide them as they individualize instruction for their students. The performance on the writing portion of the MEAP motivated staff to adopt writing across the curriculum as one of our NCA goals. Reading informational text was also a goal that came out of student performance on the MEAP. Despite the fact that students performed well in these two areas, the ERMS staff felt that the level of performance could be improved through their coordinated efforts.

ERMS, along with the rest of the district, engaged in comparing grade level curriculum objectives with state curriculum benchmarks (C1). This gap analysis endeavor more closely aligned the ERMS curriculum with those expected by the state, and has resulted in increased student performance on the MEAP.

Staff adopted as a building goal to develop an awareness of, and appreciation for, others. The initial phase of implementing this goal was to survey students, staff, and parents regarding the issue of teasing, which led to our program on addressing bullying.

Another goal was to determine the extent to which students were involved in community service. As a result of this survey, the Community Contact Club was formed. The club encourages students to volunteer in school and in a variety of community based activities, and coordinates those opportunities.

RAMS (Rockford's Action Model for Success) (G1) is developed from a survey of students, parents, and staff throughout the district. Results of this survey are utilized throughout the district and have a direct impact on ERMS. Examples of areas at ERMS that are being, or have been, addressed as a result of this data include continuing the curriculum mapping process; increasing staff's working knowledge in the use of assessment data; increasing staff and student awareness and understanding of issues surrounding diversity, racism, and cultural differences; developing a middle school alternative education program; increasing opportunities for middle school elective classes; studying the K-12 comprehensive guidance program and the viability of increased services; and investigating the feasibility of providing a K-12 strings instruction program.

H3. What assessment data are communicated to students, parents, and the community? What are the purposes of these communications? How does the school ensure that these stakeholders understand the standards for judgment and the meaning of the data?

Because the school and community connection is seen as one of our greatest assets at ERMS, communication of building and district assessment data is crucial to promoting student achievement.

When MEAP results are released each year, the district assessment coordinator meets with district and building level administration to review and summarize the data. Results are presented so that the information can be shared at the building level. The principal at ERMS presents and reviews the data with staff. Coordinated by the department head, each department meets to review results. The principal ensures that this information is shared with the Parent Advisory Council, as well as discussed in our building newsletter. District MEAP data is also presented at a public board meeting.

NCA (C1) data on our three building goals is continually collected, reviewed, and reported to staff. The information, along with MEAP data, is also presented in our yearly PA 25 report. This report is also made available on the Internet at our ERMS web page. The report is also reviewed with parents at the fall orientation at the start of each school year.

The completed RAMS (H2) document is mailed home to every Rockford resident and staff member. Each new RAMS document is reviewed at the building level, at all orientations, and at PAC meetings

H4. What standardized norm-referenced tests developed on the national, state, or district level has the school given in the last five years? What are the results for the last five years?

ERMS has not engaged in standardized testing for three years due to budget cuts. However, there are other assessments that have been administered with all students that reflect improved achievement levels.

Rockford High School just completed its twelfth year of competency testing as a graduation requirement to receive a guaranteed diploma. The instrument used is the CAT Level 19, which is a nationally normed test. The test is administered to all freshmen early in February and consists of forty-six questions in math and eighty questions in reading/language arts. Students who do not pass the test are allowed to retake the test every year. The Rockford Board of Education has established a scale score of 701 in math and 668 in reading/language arts as the criteria for receiving a guaranteed diploma. Over the past five years ninety-nine percent of Rockford graduates have met this criteria (Appendix IV). Approximately seventy-five percent of former ERMS students achieve the criteria on the first attempt. On average Rockford graduates achieve a scale score of 744 in mathematics and a scale score of 710 in reading/language arts, resulting in a normal curve equivalent (NCE) of seventy-two and sixty-eight, respectively. The success Rockford High School students demonstrate on this test reflects the quality of education delivered at ERMS.

As part of the NCA process, we have tracked student results on the Cornell Critical Thinking Test (CCTT) over the past two years. A partial version of the test is administered to sixth and seventh graders. Eighth graders take a complete version of this assessment. Student scores on the CCTT demonstrate an increase in student application of critical thinking skills. Our students have demonstrated a five percent raw score increase on the CCTT from one grade to the next.

During the 2001 and 2002 school years all sixth graders were administered the CAT test. CAT data was used to assist teachers with individualizing instruction for their students and to help determine student placement for classes the following year. ERMS sixth graders consistently achieved above a normal curve equivalent (NCE) of 57 in reading, language, mathematics, spelling, study skills, science, and social studies.

H5. What are the results from the MEAP for the last five years?

ERMS students' MEAP scores are consistently higher than the state average, and rank among the top three or four in all categories in the county. These scores are attributed to the quality curriculum and excellent instruction that all ERMS students receive. Efforts have been made to make sure that the maximum number of ERMS students participates in the testing (consistently between ninety-eight and one-hundred percent for the last five years.). (Appendix V).

H6. What alternative assessments of student performance does the school use?

As part of our selection procedure for the ROCK program (C2), the PLAN test is administered to sixth graders who wish to enter the ROCK program in the seventh grade. The PLAN test, published by

ACT, consists of test items in English, mathematics, reading and science. The test is normed at the tenth grade level. Test data is available for the last two years. In 2003-2004, 165 students (out of 301) were tested. The results were as follows:

<u>Test</u>	<u>Percentile</u>
English	48
Mathematics	51
Reading	53
Science	48
Composite	50

In 2004-2005, 157 students (out of 315) were tested. The results were as follows:

<u>Test</u>	<u>Percentile</u>
English	55
Mathematics	54
Reading	61
Science	49
Composite	50

PLAN scores provide our sixth grade staff with an indication of student mastering of curriculum content and critical thinking skills. Students scoring in the top five percent on the PLAN are recommended for the ROCK program.

The Cornell Critical Thinking Test (H4) is administered to all eighth graders, and is used as one indicator to determine placement in the ninth grade accelerated science course.

East Rockford Middle School participates in the Midwest Talent Search, which is sponsored by Northwestern University. The MTS provides the opportunity for students with more advanced academic abilities to take the Explore Test (normed at the tenth grade level, and available to sixth grade students only), the ACT, or the SAT (both college entrance examinations). In 2004-2005, seven students chose to take this test.

H7. What are the data for the last five years in the following areas that serve as quantitative indicators of the school climate and engagement?

	2004-2005	2003-2004	2002-2003	2002-2001	2000-2001
Daily Student Attendance	94.80%	95.40%	95.00%	94.70%	94.50%
Daily Teacher Attendance	98.40%	98.67%	98.68%	98.82%	99.10%
Teacher Turnover Rate	1%	3%	1%	0%	1%

Student daily attendance is taken each class period. The student daily attendance percentage is derived from the number of periods a student is present divided by the number periods in a school year. A normal ERMS school day consists of six periods.

Defining "Teacher Turnover Rate" as the percentage of teachers that have left the school and district due to a new job (two) or married and moved (three) out of the area and/or state during the period from 2000-2005, we have had an average of one and one-half percent. Conversely we have had ninety-nine percent stay in Rockford Public Schools. Both the school and the district are very proud of the fact that most of our staff stay in Rockford.

The 2005 Rockford High School graduating class was the first class graduating students from ERMS. There were 583 students that graduated in 2005. Twelve students dropped out during their high school career, which is a dropout rate of two-percent. The graduation rate for the class of 2005 was ninety-eight percent. Two of the twelve students that dropped out were from ERMS.

H8. Which awards received by the school, staff, or students are most indicative of school success?

The North Central Association of Schools and Colleges has accredited East Rockford Middle School since the spring of 2000. East Rockford Middle School continuously meets Annual Yearly Progress with a letter grade of "A" from the State of Michigan. ERMS has also been recognized for large contributions to, and participation with the local Relay for Life campaign to help raise money and awareness for fighting cancer.

Our staff has received many awards as well. Staff members have received local outstanding teacher awards. Many teachers have received grants from the Rockford Education Foundation to help facilitate student achievement. Patti Mollema, an ERMS art teacher, has been honored with the Middle Level Educator of the Year award by the Michigan Association of Middle School Educators, and has been honored in “Who’s Who Among America’s Teachers”. Staff members have also been fortunate to have articles and books published, and drawings and artwork featured at local and statewide galleries.

One of the most exciting aspects of East Rockford Middle School is the recognition our students receive on a yearly basis. Eighty-four students receive Outstanding Students and Outstanding Citizens Awards during every school year, as voted on by staff members. These students are recognized at monthly Board of Education meetings. Approximately sixty-five percent of ERMS students make the academic honor roll each marking period. On average, seventy-five students are inducted into the National Junior Honor Society each year. Students are also rewarded with weekly prizes through our “Gotcha” program (B2). Numerous students have had their short stories, poetry, essays, and artwork published and displayed in local, state, and national newspapers, contests, magazines, and galleries.

Our Band and Choir students have been chosen to participate in local, state, and out-of-state concerts and ensembles, receiving high marks. Our 2002 eighth grade band was selected to perform at the Michigan Music Educators Inservice in Ann Arbor. Each year an eighth grader is honored with the district Example of Excellence award based on exhibiting qualities indicative of a well-rounded student and person. Several ERMS students are selected each year as scholarship participants at the Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp. An ERMS student was recently selected through audition to perform the lead in the Blue Lake Music Theater Summer Performing Group’s musical, *Leader of the Pack*. ERMS students often are selected to perform at the Grand Rapids Civic Theater and the Grand Rapids Ballet. ERMS Odyssey of the Mind teams have qualified and placed in regional, state, and World Championships.

APPENDIX I

East Rockford Middle School Co-Curricular Activities

All ERMS students are highly encouraged to participate in co-curricular activities while attending middle school. Our co-curricular activities (excluding athletics) are based on student interest. Below is a list of all activities offered at ERMS:

Academic Activities:

Students have opportunities to get involved in academic activities such as Odyssey of the Mind, Geography Bee, Spelling Bee, Band, Choir and the Midwest Talent Search.

After School Activities:

Activities for student participation in a non-athletic manner would include Student Council, National Junior Honor Society, Yearbook, Drama Club, and our After School Program. The After School Program allows students to be involved in various activities, such as, but not limited to, Guitar Jam, Scrap-Booking, Video Production, Fly Fishing, Photography, Computers, Board Games, Chess & Checkers, Jewelry Making, and Pep/Spirit Class.

Athletic Activities:

Students are encouraged to participate in various athletic activities. We offer four (4) interscholastic athletic seasons: Fall, Winter I, Winter II, and Spring. The sports offered are:

Season	Girls	Boys
Fall	Cross Country	Cross Country
	Sideline Cheerleading	78er Football
	Basketball (A & B teams)	
	Tennis	
Winter I	Competitive Cheer	Basketball (A & B teams)
	Swimming & Diving	
Winter II	Volleyball (A & B teams)	Swimming & Diving
		Wrestling
Spring	Track & Field	Tennis
		Track & Field

Intramural Activities:

To provide opportunities for all students to participate in sports, we offer an Intramural Program. This program consists of three seasons: Fall, Winter, and Spring. Intramural activities include but are not limited to, Aerobics, Archery, Basketball, Bowling, Cross Country, Dance, Floor Hockey, Golf, Skateboarding/Inline Skating, Snow Football, Soccer, Softball, Tennis, and Volleyball.

ERMS Student Population

	Total Population (6 th -7 th 8 th)	6 th Grade Girl Population	6 th Grade Boy Population	6 th Grade Total Population	7 th & 8 th Grade Girl Population	7 th & 8 th Grade Boy Population	7 th & 8 th Total Grade Population	Total Girls Pop.	Total Boys Pop.
2000-2001	893	133	157	290	311	292	603	444	449
2001-2002	865	139	129	268	287	310	597	426	439
2002-2003	894	143	154	297	290	307	597	433	461
2003-2004	901	146	155	301	298	302	600	444	457
2004-2005	948	151	164	315	313	320	633	464	484
5-Year Average	900	142	123	294	300	307	606	442	458
Average % of Population	100%	17%	14%	31%	34%	35%	69%	49%	51%

ERMS Co-Curricular Participation

	*Girls Athletics (7 th & 8 th Girls Population)	*Boys Athletics (7 th & 8 th Boys Population)	*Girls Intramurals (Total Girls 6 th - 8 th Population)	*Boys Intramurals (Total Boys 6 th - 8 th Population)	*Girls After School (Total Girls 6 th - 8 th Population)	*Boys After School (Total Boys 6 th - 8 th Population)
2000-2001	201	229	85	95	122	118
2001-2002	194	206	113	125	135	145
2002-2003	196	204	117	128	111	119
2003-2004	182	193	125	150	120	130
2004-2005	209	216	122	128	115	105
5-Year Average	196	210	113	127	120	123
Average % of Population	66%	68%	25%	28%	27%	27%

*Numbers Based on Percentages of Population & Estimate of Number of Multi-Activity Students

APPENDIX II

East Rockford Middle School **Student Discipline Report**

	2000-01 N=893	2001-02 N=865	2002-03 N=894	2003-04 N=901	2004-05 N=948
Alcohol/ Drugs	1.3%	0.5%	0.9%	0.2%	0.0%
Truancy	0.8%	2.0%	3.2%	1.6%	0.4%
Assault	0.2%	0.4%	0.5%	0.5%	0.2%
Weapons	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%
Tobacco	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.5%	0.1%
Vandalism	1.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.9%	1.6%

*This chart represents the percentages of ERMS students involved in each category.

APPENDIX IV

Rockford High School Competency Testing/Guaranteed Diploma Results

<u>Graduating Class</u>	<u>Students Tested</u>	<u>Students Passing</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
2000 – 2001	508	498	98%
2001 – 2002	573	565	99%
2002 – 2003	554	553	99%
2003 – 2004	551	551	100%
2004 – 2005	576	565	98%

APPENDIX V**EAST ROCKFORD MIDDLE SCHOOL**
MEAP DATA**Reading**

2004 - 2005 2003 - 2004 2002 - 2003 2001 - 2002 2000 - 2001

7th Grade	Testing Month	January	January	January	January	January
School Scores						
Total or Composite Score		88	80	83	69	77
Level 1		42	26	36	---	---
Level 2		47	54	47	---	---
Number Tested		321	312	280	303	256
Percent of total students		99	100	99	99	99
Number Excluded		2	1	3	4	3
Percent of Students Excluded		1%	0%	1%	1%	1%
District Scores						
Total or Composite Score		87	78	81	68	73
Level 1		40	26	35	---	---
Level 2		47	54	46	---	---
State Scores						
Total or Composite Score		73	61	61	54	58
Level 1		25	16	19	---	---
Level 2		48	45	42	---	---

Writing

2004 - 2005 2003 - 2004 2002 - 2003 2001 - 2002 2000 - 2001

7th Grade	Testing Month	January	January	January	January	January
School Scores						
Total or Composite Score		71	54	61	84	82
Level 1		7	5	5	---	---
Level 2		63	49	56	---	---
Number Tested		321	312	280	306	273
Percent of total students		99	100	99	99	99
Number Excluded		2	1	3	4	3
Percent of Students Excluded		1%	0%	1%	1%	1%
District Scores						
Total or Composite Score		73	61	69	78	81
Level 1		8	6	8	---	---
Level 2		64	55	61	---	---
State Scores						
Total or Composite Score		54	47	57	66	68
Level 1		3	3	5	---	---
Level 2		50	44	52	---	---

ELA (R + W)

2004 - 2005 2003 - 2004 2002 - 2003 2001 - 2002 2000 - 2001

7th Grade	Testing Month	January	January	January	January	January
School Scores						
Total or Composite Score		86	76	78	---	---
Level 1		24	13	18	---	---
Level 2		62	63	60	---	---
Number Tested		321	312	280	---	---
Percent of total students		99	100	99	---	---
Number Excluded		2	1	3	---	---
Percent of Students Excluded		1%	0%	1%	---	---
District Scores						
Total or Composite Score		84	74	79	---	---
Level 1		24	12	20	---	---
Level 2		60	62	59	---	---
State Scores						
Total or Composite Score		66	57	58	---	---
Level 1		12	6	10	---	---
Level 2		55	51	48	---	---

Mathematics

2004 - 2005 2003 - 2004 2002 - 2003 2001 - 2002 2000 - 2001

8th Grade	Testing Month	January	January	January	January	January
School Scores						
Total or Composite Score		88	88	88	80	91
Level 1		67	65	49	54	65
Level 2		21	23	29	26	26
Number Tested		306	284	315	291	296
Percent of total students		99	100	99	100	98
Number Excluded		2	1	3	1	5
Percent of Students Excluded		1%	0%	1%	0%	2%
District Scores						
Total or Composite Score		86	85	77	77	89
Level 1		65	63	50	50	---
Level 2		21	22	27	27	---
State Scores						
Total or Composite Score		62	63	52	53	65
Level 1		36	38	31	29	---
Level 2		26	25	21	24	---

Science

2004 - 2005 2003 - 2004 2002 - 2003 2001 - 2002 2000 - 2001

8th Grade	Testing Month	January	January	January	January	January
School Scores						
Total or Composite Score		87	88	85	89	41
Level 1		20	26	27	26	---
Level 2		67	62	58	63	---
Number Tested		306	284	315	291	296
Percent of total students		99	100	99	100	98
Number Excluded		2	1	3	1	5
Percent of Students Excluded		1%	0%	1%	0%	2%
District Scores						
Total or Composite Score		84	85	84	88	38
Level 1		20	24	27	31	---
Level 2		64	61	57	57	---
State Scores						
Total or Composite Score		65	66	65	67	20
Level 1		13	14	17	15	---
Level 2		51	52	48	52	---

Social Studies

2004 - 2005 2003 - 2004 2002 - 2003 2001 - 2002 2000 - 2001

8th Grade	Testing Month	January	January	January	January	January
School Scores						
Total or Composite Score		47	48	43	51	51
Level 1		11	11	12	17	11
Level 2		37	37	31	34	40
Number Tested		306	284	315	291	297
Percent of total students		99	100	99	100	98
Number Excluded		2	1	3	1	5
Percent of Students Excluded		1%	0%	1%	0%	2%
District Scores						
Total or Composite Score		48	47	42	43	48
Level 1		12	10	12	13	9
Level 2		37	37	30	30	38
State Scores						
Total or Composite Score		30	29	33	32	32
Level 1		7	6	8	8	6
Level 2		23	23	25	24	24