

BUILDING RESPONSIBLE INTELLIGENT CREATIVE KIDS (B.R.I.C.K.): A CASE
STUDY OF A TEACHER–INITIATED PUBLIC SCHOOL REFORM MODEL IN

NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Building Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids (B.R.I.C.K.): A Case
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By DOROTHY KNAUER

Dissertation Director:
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It is a complex task to educate children and appropriately measure achievement even under ideal circumstances. However, attempts to do so in desperately poor urban environments must consider the many variables that impact learning if we are to help children succeed. Even where there is strong will to make things better, there also may be an urgency to produce immediate results that makes assessment of the big picture or broad effects difficult. This case study follows the first four years of a school turnaround model in Newark, NJ. The study goes beyond student test scores to observe and document efforts to change the school environment, impact teacher/staff/parent attitudes and skills, and assess the reform effort in the words of those who participated. A teacher–led group promised to turn around one of the state’s lowest performing and most impoverished schools. The founders, all teachers and former Teach For America alumni, created an organization based on best practices and dedicated to the success of neighborhood children. They named their educational non–profit B.R.I.C.K.—Building Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids—which is both its name and its mission. Mixed methods of data collection included the analysis 200 parent surveys, 40 teacher surveys,

40 interviews with teachers, staff and parents; archives and documents; and field observations.

Results suggest that when sustained focus on early literacy instruction and achievement is accomplished, more students learn to read at a higher level of competency in spite of extreme factors working against their success (e.g., poverty, transiency, chronic absenteeism, special needs). That said, administrators should be wary of overinterpreting single year test scores after implementing major reform, because complex factors can influence a school in a single academic year. Norm-referenced and criterion-referenced student achievement data, lessons learned by administrators, teachers, and staff, challenges, implications for best practices and resulting recommendations are presented. In an era of loss of local control of education and increased emphasis on accountability, the present study of a neighborhood-based, teacher-led school “turnaround” model provides potential guidance and inspiration to practitioners, policy makers, parents, and local citizens.

Preface

I began this journey wanting to learn more about the forces behind inequities in communities like my own in Newark, New Jersey, especially in education. I felt certain that a closer look at research and history might yield new approaches to building a more equitable community for all.

The Urban Systems doctoral program, a joint program between the School of Architecture at New Jersey Institute of Technology, the School of Nursing (then at UMDNJ now Rutgers–Newark), and the School of Urban Education at Rutgers University–Newark was innovative. Exploring the intersections of health and health disparities, built environment, and urban educational policy and reform with other students from these diverse professional training backgrounds seemed like an ideal approach.

My primary research interests while in this program have been urban school gardens, full service community schools, and BRICK Avon Academy. Thank you to everyone who facilitated and supported my research!

Acknowledgement and Dedication

Acknowledgement

Special thanks to a number of dear sister friends for their extraordinary support:

Friend Ann Hoffner is an amazing and talented writer and editor ... and my editing “angel” for certain throughout the many stages of this dissertation!! Thanks also to Ann for sharing her mother, Dr. Dorothea Hoffner, who has been a second mom and role model for me over the years.

Dr. Paula Cochran is a college friend who served as a leader at her university and in her field of Speech Therapy. After retirement, Paula generously gave me extensive support and guidance to help me write and edit this entire document at least twice over the past 12 months. Without her encouragement, expertise, and weekly support, this task would have been very difficult to finish. *Everything will Be Alright.*

Dr. Regina Adesanya, an early childhood educator and non-profit leader, urged and encouraged me. This friend’s reading and editing support moved me forward in this endeavor numerous times. I am especially thankful to “Dr. A” for connecting me to teaching at the university level that gave me new incentive to finish this task. (And thankful for my students who inspire me each semester!)

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Dr. Jeff Backstrand stepped in as my “new advisor” to help me revise and *complete* the dissertation from January to June. Thank you for your wonderful encouragement, your generosity of time for editing and guiding, and your good spirit.

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Thanks to all my amazing and dear friends from near and far: from high school and college, to non–profit work in the Newark community (colleagues at PCCI and CAC, friends, former students, Zonta sisters), to friends around the world and others in a very wide community of support who have encouraged me in this endeavor for the past decade.

I could not have done this without all these amazing, talented, and generous individuals.

Dedication

First, I give thanks to God for the grace and blessings that were bestowed on me, including my parents and family. I dedicate this work to my parents. I wish that I had finished this degree while my parents were still living. My mother and father believed in us and loved us unconditionally. They were both lifelong learners and inspired a love of learning in us. They were our greatest advocates, supporters, and champions. They were both social justice advocates and activists. I like to think that some of them rubbed off on me. My mother was a graduate of Douglas College for Women (now Rutgers). My grandfather was a graduate of Rutgers Class of 1919. I am humbled and honored to follow in the Rutgers family tradition a century later.

I dedicate this work to my family, my parents, my sisters Beth and Kathy, and my nephew Christopher and niece, Alicen. Both of the young ones have already finished Master's degrees and are continuing in practice and in academe and in finding ways to build a better world. I thank them all for their encouragement and support!

I have a number of “children” through my work with Protestant Community Centers (PCCI) in Newark for many years. It is a blessing that so many of them keep in touch with me. I am especially grateful for my “adopted son,” Dr. Haslyn Hunte, and his family. I mentored Haslyn while he was growing up in Newark, and then he got a PhD and mentored me as I embarked on this journey. I dedicate this study of Newark to all of them.

I dedicate this to a wide circle of family and friends who encouraged me and inspire me with their lives, their work, their faith, and their love.

I dedicate this to my community of Newark, New Jersey, the place I have lived and worked with staff, educators, parents and students, and volunteers, and where I have found community for the past 40 years. I have been deeply blessed to be a part of this amazing community.

Finally, I dedicate this work to the BRICK Avon Academy community of learners—the diverse administrators, faculty and staff, who shared their time and their knowledge, wisdom, their perspectives and questions with me that allowed me to look into what they were doing and how they were doing it. I'm so grateful for their welcome, their generosity of time and information, and their commitment to the children and families. They welcomed me and allowed me to see their commitment, their passion for teaching and the children. This work is difficult but essential to our future. Each one of

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

Introduction

In an urban, high-poverty, failing school district in Newark, New Jersey—a city known as “Brick City”—a group of public school teachers were devastated by the consistent number of high school students they worked with who were intelligent and creative but who lacked the academic skills to pursue their goals and dreams. The urgency of that wasted human potential and its effect on the children motivated these six individuals to come together to discuss, research and devise a proposal for action to correct this injustice. They knew starting with younger students would be a big part of the solution. These teachers—all former Teach For America (TFA) participants who continued as Newark Public Schools (NPS) teachers after completing TFA—formed an educational non-profit. They studied local and national best practices and created a model for reform. They proposed to the school district that they be permitted to take over one of the failing public neighborhood elementary schools in the same neighborhood as the local South Ward high school (Malcolm X. Shabazz High School) to implement their vision and their model. The opportunity came through in the fall of 2010 when they were assigned a failing elementary school to implement their reform model. They began to create a learning community led by teachers to change the education and life trajectories of over 600 young children—preparing them for global citizenship and leadership. Despite challenges from forces inside and outside the school and the school system, these teachers believed they could lead a research-based education model that would help their students acquire the foundations for strong academic achievement that would support

their aspirations. These founders named their educational non-profit B.R.I.C.K.—Building Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids—which is both its name and its mission.

In the 2012–2013 school year, the year the present study began, the founders were in their third year of implementing their vision and their model at their first BRICK school, BRICK Avon Academy (formerly Avon Avenue School). They were also in their second year of three of a federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) School Improvement Grant (SIG) under the transformation model as a turnaround school. The present case study describes and analyzes the first four years of implementation and outcomes of this hybrid model of partnership of a teacher-led school within the large urban district of Newark, New Jersey. The model was a hybrid because it was part of the district, but also had some of the autonomy of a charter school. Charter schools are independent organizations with leadership, staff, and governance all separate from the local school district, but receiving public funding. In this case, BRICK Avon Academy (BAA) was run by an independent education management organization (EMO)—BRICK—but still operated within the Newark Public Schools (NPS) district as a traditional neighborhood public K–8 school. BRICK, the non-profit, had an agreement with NPS for greater autonomy and flexibility in staffing positions and curriculum than traditional NPS schools, but the school facility, budget, leadership and back office services were all still a part of NPS. Furthermore, all of the school staff members were NPS employees, and members of the affiliated bargaining units (unions) in the district. The present study explores the components and processes of the BRICK model as it was being implemented in the first four years at BRICK Avon Academy, and tells the narrative through the voices

and stories of the main actors: the teacher-leaders, the staff, the students and parents, key leaders and partners in the district, and the community. As one of its founders stated:

Education reform is the new civil rights movement of our time. All of our nation's ills will not be solved until we fix our education system. How many potential doctors, Nobel Laureates, lawyers, lifelong volunteers, great parents, teachers, and prize-winning scientists will we continue to lose? So, this is our sojourn—to Build Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids so they can achieve their dreams! (Dominique Lee, founder and director, writing for the BRICK founding team members.)

The Problem

The Broader Problem: Access to Opportunity Through Education

The broader social issue addressed by the present study is how BRICK educators sought to change conditions and student outcomes in order to mitigate the failure of capable students so that their students gained access to opportunities afforded through education. Using the BRICK model, the present study explores what can be done at a local level by educators, communities and students to overcome internal and external systems problems that prevent students from succeeding in school, especially in low Social Economic Status (SES) neighborhoods. The present study explores how and what founders and participants at BRICK Avon Academy did to enact strategies for:

- how to motivate, support and inspire children in an impoverished, hyper-segregated urban community to fall in love with learning, to meet and exceed academic skills and benchmarks, to read on grade level, to graduate from high school and to achieve to their potential in order to allow them access to opportunities afforded educated Americans and to become fully participating citizens in a global economy;
- how to build and sustain organizational cohesion (trust, respect) to create learning communities involving high quality teachers and teams of teachers;

- how to address disparities and external neighborhood factors that provide barriers to these goals;
- how to build alliances with families and other community leaders, organizations and institutions to help create conditions which supported the BRICK vision (e.g., good health, adequate safe and stable housing, nutrition, work and livable wages, safety/reduction of violence, self-confidence and efficacy); and
- how to build a reform model and enact change *within* the district/system: focusing on teachers, differentiated learning, neighborhood children and families, and best practices.

Closing The Achievement Gap and Increasing Educational Opportunities

From a broad view, the overarching problem being addressed by BRICK and other turnaround schools is closing the academic achievement gap in the United States, especially for children in low SES communities. Using BRICK as a case study, the present study examines how BRICK addressed major challenges in the attempt to close that gap to insure that all students could be academically prepared with 21st century skills for a knowledge-based global economy. The achievement gap is not a new problem; however, certain current trends have increased the size of the problem and have made the issue more urgent to the nation's wellbeing now and in the future. Trends influencing the educational opportunity gap in the United States include:

- Increasing competition between nations for more highly educated citizens in a global, knowledge-based economy and the surpassing of the United States by other nations (Finland, Japan, Singapore) on international math, science

and literacy achievement assessments such as Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP);

- The persistent failure of a majority of minority students of color in predominantly poor schools in poor mostly urban neighborhoods to pass standardized proficiency tests; and the failure of many of these same schools to insure the high school graduation of the majority of their students (i.e., over 50% of students in many schools become high school drop-outs and fail to get a high school diploma) (Belfield & Levin, Eds., 2007);
- For those students acquiring high school diplomas who go on to post-secondary education, the push to increase their completion of university and post-secondary education;
- A demographic shift in the United States, in which children of color (formerly known as the minority) now outnumber white children (formerly the majority) and this trend is predicted to continue increasing over the next four decades (Belfield & Levin, Eds., 2007);
- An ongoing inequity for poor children, the majority of whom are of color, to access a high quality public education, often due to inequities in resources or policies (housing, economic, health, etc.) that segregate communities by class; and
- An often unacknowledged correlation between various social determinants that influence education and education outcomes, which are part of other systems than education, e.g., poverty, housing, jobs, neighborhood

environment, health and access to healthcare, nutrition and food access, crime, etc. (Anyon, 1997, 2005; Berliner, 2006; Rothstein, 2004a, 2004b).

On an individual level, this means that the outcomes for many students in these communities are mostly negative, and they have little chance of breaking out of poverty. Without the education and critical skills to access a higher education and a job in the knowledge economy, the predictions for these students' lives are grim. They are likely to be plagued by poverty, incarceration, early disability or death from preventable health-related problems, including violence. At the very least, this is a tremendous waste of human potential. It is also a matter of inequity, injustice, the rights of citizens and civil rights.

Acknowledgement and consideration of the overarching problem of the achievement gap in education for children in poor communities of color leads to the question of how to address this problem. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and its related turnaround school policies were legislated federally (2002) to insure academic success of all children. The NCLB Act encouraged states and local districts to set standards for holding schools accountable for educating all children and to establish sanctions including school closure as a new consequence for failure.

One of the parallel neo-liberal responses to the problem of failing schools is the rapid growth of charter schools. A charter school is an autonomous organization with its own governance, leadership, staffing and budget, which is separate from the local school district but funded with public school funds. Charter schools are seen by some as a way to provide competition with traditional public schools, thereby forcing either greater success (student achievement) for survival or closure of those poor schools for their

failure (Hoxby, 2001). The growth of charter schools, especially in hyper-segregated urban districts, may increase “school choice,” but also may further concentrate students with the greatest needs in the public school district while decreasing the financial resources available to address those needs (Baker & Weber, 2017). Many of the larger public charter school organizations, such as KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) have founders with affiliations to Teach For America, like the BRICK founders. Charter schools generally are governed by private boards and are not mandated to serve all students, as are traditional public schools. Charter schools require parents to complete an application for admission, often through a lottery for limited spaces. Charter schools can (and do) ask children to leave the school for many different reasons.

Now, over fifteen years after its enactment, has the NCLB Act (2001) been effective in helping to close the achievement gap? Have these interventions, supports, and sanctions for Schools in Need of Improvement in the NCLB legislation provided any benefits for the students in those schools? A limited body of research thus far suggests some benefit to some students in some cases, and little benefit to many other students, but no reversal of the problem. Are these turnaround interventions and the funds and energy being expended really helping students to increase their achievement and their educational opportunities? Research and findings about questions like these will be covered more in depth in Chapter 2.

Although research about NCLB and its influence on reducing the achievement gap shows mixed results (Sadovnik, et al. 2007), a large body of research over the past half-century addresses education access and equity, and various other aspects of education reform. Theory of practice research, like that of Bryk, Bender, Allensworth,

Luppescu, & Easton (2010), identifies the components of effective schools (Edmonds, 1979) and the complex interplay of those components. A much smaller, but growing, body of research looks specifically at the ability of educational leaders at chronically failing, turnaround schools to effect change and close the achievement gap. School leadership, pedagogy and curriculum, student-centered approaches, longer school days/years, and parent and community engagement are subsets of effective schools theory and research which will be used as a framework for the present study.

The Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to look at how a group of teachers formed and built a school organization dedicated to the success of neighborhood children in an impoverished area of Newark, NJ. With a vision and a plan for transforming the lives of children to empower them with education, skills, and opportunities correlated with education, the present study explores how did they go about realizing their goals? What did they learn along the way? Were they successful in turning around a failing school?

Specifically, the present study looked at four years of implementation (2010–2014), with the research being done in real time during the third year (2012–2013) of BRICK’s first school, BRICK Avon Academy.

The case study examined the goals, structures, and strategies used by the BRICK Avon community over the first four years of implementation, as related by stakeholders and through documents and archives, during the third school year (2012–13). It also described the outcomes for student achievement over this same period of time. This study investigated the active vision and process of transforming BRICK Avon Academy into a professional learning community that supported quality teaching and instruction as a core

focus. Questions of significance to BRICK and others may be: What were the challenges and plans for sustaining the model, especially after the School Improvement Grant (SIG) funding ended (2014–15)? Can a teacher run school such as BRICK operate successfully within and in partnership with a large urban public school district? If so, how, on the ground, in real time? Can education reform alone be expected to close the achievement gap?

This Case Study

The present study of BRICK Avon Academy explores at the school level how a locally developed model, based on the best research practices available, addressed the problem of how to close the achievement gap in a failing urban public school. The study seeks to tell the story of the possibilities, opportunities, and challenges faced by a group of visionary teachers who formed BRICK. Together they enlisted teachers, staff, parents and the school community to invest in a model of shared decision-making (not a traditional top-down model), centered on the learning and achievement of children at BRICK Avon Academy. These leaders tried to recruit, support and invest in teachers within the NPS district who were committed believers in the potential of their students to reach and exceed learning goals, teachers who wanted to join the BRICK team. By attempting to create a focused and collaborative learning community, the founders of BRICK believed that they could help any child in Newark acquire the educational foundation to become a responsible, highly educated global citizen—and to do so in a traditional local elementary neighborhood public school.

BRICK Avon Academy was one of the first teacher-run schools in the NY metro-region, and the only one that was not a charter school. The present study was

conducted during the third year of implementation (2012–2013 school year), and seeks to tell the story through the different yet interwoven perspectives of those engaged in the action—founders, teacher-leaders, staff, parents, and community partners. The study also looks at the school data and academic outcomes. School turnaround under NCLB demands transformational change in a matter of three to four years, to avoid school closure. Although BRICK through its partnership agreement with Newark Public Schools had more autonomy than the traditional NPS school, it was not a charter school. Like traditional public schools, BRICK had to (and wanted to) accept and educate any neighborhood child. In addition to changing the mindset about how schools are run, BRICK was trying to turn the odds around for all neighborhood children, to help them become successful students and responsible global citizens. How did the children at BAA fare under the BRICK model? What are some perceived and some measured outcomes for the students at BRICK? This study looks at how the BRICK organization implemented practical and difficult approaches in an effort to close the achievement gap for failing schools and open educational opportunities for all children.

Summary of Theoretical Framework

The present study uses several research-based theories as a framework:

1. *Effective schools theory* and research builds on research and practice (Edmonds, 1979; Bryk et al., 2010; and Calkins et al., 2007). Included in this is a *turnaround theory* (Calkins et al., 2007) based upon High Performing, High Poverty Schools (HPHP) research documenting key interactive components of effective schools.

2. *Teacher leadership theory* distinguishes and explores leadership from a teacher–led perspective, teachers’ roles in school leadership, and how that effects organizational and achievement outcomes.
3. *Ecology of human development theory* (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) suggests the nested, interconnectedness of human learning and development in context with systems and environment. Included under this human ecology theory will be several approaches and theories for reform including Full Service Community schools, and the Broader, Bolder Approach.

Significance (Importance) of Research

It is the hope of the researcher that the present case study will hold value for everyone who is engaged in the difficult work to improve schools in Newark and in other urban areas. This case study can give a broader perspective to those doing this work by incorporating different voices and perspectives from those working together at BRICK Avon, as recorded by an objective, third party academic researcher.

In an era of removal of local control for education, school closures, and teacher demoralization, this case study about a neighborhood based, teacher–led school “turnaround” model may also provide guidance and inspiration to other practitioners, policy makers, parents and local citizens. It may offer counter–evidence to policy makers who argue against including teachers and community participants in planning and governance of local schools.

Additionally, because the school was a “transformation” school under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the research may add to the relatively small body of research about NCLB turnaround schools with SIG grants and their influences on student

outcomes short- and long-term. (BRICK Avon Academy was the first elementary school in NPS to have an individual SIG grant—the other six were high schools.)

The study also considers how founders with the Teach For America perspective approach school reform—is theirs a neoliberal approach?

The present study which documents “real time” year three implementation of a teacher-led school reform model in a turnaround school adds to the growing body of research about what worked and what didn’t work, and how it was done. Little real time research that includes voices of various stakeholders documents the turnaround process and results. Research about sustainability of reform efforts and real time research about practice models that result in positive student outcomes is scarce. The present study hopes to contribute to this body of research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This literature review looks first at the history of the achievement gap and some of the major education reform responses that sought to address and close it. After an overview of general education reforms in the United States, the literature review presents recent federal reform under No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top—the reform context in which the present study was conducted in 2012–14. It includes a review of studies about outcomes for states, districts and schools involved in turning around failing schools by NCLB mandates and studies about outcomes; and looks at recent reports about initial outcomes for turn around schools with School Improvement Grants (similar to the one BRICK Avon Academy received for their second through fourth years of implementation). Next, the review presents a brief local context to reform, both at the state and the local (city) level. The researcher then presents the theoretical framework for this dissertation study, and gives background and details pertinent to the BRICK case study. Specifically, components and research of effective schools theory—such as school leadership, quality and development of teachers, student-centered and data-driven pedagogy and curriculum, and the engagement of parents and community as partners—all parallel the BRICK case study. This literature helps provide a foundation and framework for the study. Bronfenbrenner’s theory of the ecology of human development provides a larger context and lens through which to view other influences on schools and the lives of students. Finally, a brief review of the literature about Teach For America lends background to the context and background of the founders of BRICK.

The Achievement Gap in the United States and New Jersey and Newark

The overarching problem in American education today, as it has been for the past forty years, is the gap in achievement between the population of poor, largely children of color, and that of children of the largely white middle class. While there is still a drive to raise the achievement levels and scores of all United States children, it is the poor academic performance of subsets of students that are cause for alarm, especially as these subsets are increasingly likely to become the majority population.

The achievement gap, first used to indicate a gap in academic achievement based on race and class, is now referred to by many researchers as “the opportunity gap” (Brooks, NY Times 2012; Putnam et al., 2012). Putnam suggests that the growing economic divide signals the death of the American Dream for poor children due to unequal access to opportunity and human and social capital in such areas as parental time spent with children; enrichment opportunities; and other areas influencing the gap in achievement between haves and have nots.

According to the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 92 percent of white eighth graders were basic proficiency or better in reading, while just 71 percent of Hispanic students and 66 percent of black students reached the mark. The gap was even wider among fourth graders in reading (Mooney, 2011). In math, the overall gaps were comparable, but especially striking was the disparity among students who reached the advanced levels. In fourth grade, for instance, 12 percent of white students were graded advanced, compared with just 2 percent of black and Hispanic students (Mooney, 2011). 2019 NAEP scores nationwide show little change (and some decreases) in gains made to close the achievement gap in the first decade of the 21st century (Educational Next, 2019).

New Jersey has a considerable achievement gap, especially with low-income students (mostly of color) at the bottom. Still, New Jersey was one of just three states where the gap in fourth grade math scores has narrowed between white and minority students since the early 1990's. And while other gaps remain, minority and low-income students in NJ have seen gains on nearly all of the tests (Mooney, 2011), progress on closing the gap. 2013 NAEP scores showed NJ students outperforming students in other states across the board (National Center for Educational Statistics, NCES). However, the achievement gap in New Jersey is greater between students of color and white students than in many other states, and mostly correlated to socioeconomic factors. The achievement gap did close significantly for eighth grader Latino students in NJ in math (NCES). Assessments continue to show, show stark differences between the achievement (and life outcomes) of New Jersey's urban, poor children and their peers in more affluent districts.

Newark, like other major cities in New Jersey, has been a highly segregated city with huge disparities by race and class in every facet of education—personnel, facilities, resources (Anyon, 1997). Interestingly, Avon Avenue School and the surrounding neighborhood was, in the 1940s and 1950s, a mix of three ethnic groups: Jewish, Caucasian non-Jewish (mostly Catholic), and African American (alumni). By the 1980's Newark's population was around 70% African American, and about 25% Hispanic (Anyon, 1997; Tuttle, 2010). Test scores and graduation rates were abysmal (Anyon, 1997). After threatening to step in for more than twenty years, the State of New Jersey took over operation of the Newark schools in 1995. When BRICK stepped into leadership at BRICK Avon Academy in 2010, the school—chronically failing like all of the schools

in the South Ward—had the second worst NJASK student achievement scores in the Newark Public Schools.

Review of Education Reform

School reform has been a major topic in national policy dialogue for more than a century. Schools have been seen on one hand as the institution that helps hold societies together (functionalism) (Durkheim, 1956, 1962) and on the other hand, have been viewed as a mechanism to maintain the social order and the status quo (structuralism) (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Persell & Cookson, 1985). Schools have played an important role in a largely immigrant nation, teaching about citizenship and democracy (Dewey, 1916), and equipping children with skills needed in industry and the workforce (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Acquiring an education is seen by many as the key to providing individuals with an opportunity to move up to a better life and social status. Yet public school has never been an institution of equality for all; it has always been influenced by political, social and economic policies that favored some over others.

In the first half of the 20th century, progressives like John Dewey advocated that good schools would connect learning to life and would contribute to the public good and thus, the strength of the nation (Dewey, 1916; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Like the founders of BRICK, Dewey believed in the central role of education to develop students as active citizens. Other educational leaders from the same period advocated for schools as the purveyor of a unified national culture, language, and values, immersing immigrants into a unified American melting pot, and also as the backbone of the nation producing the workers needed at all levels for American industry (Garrison, 2009; Tyack, 1974). In either viewpoint, schools insure the strength and prosperity of the nation.

In the second half of the 20th century, Americans became fearfully focused on the general inadequacy of United States education and workforce preparation, especially in science and math. If the United States were to remain competitive and dominant in global economy and in security (including space exploration and development), the quality of education for all students would have to be strengthened significantly (Payne, 2008; Tyack, 1974; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Sadovnik, Cookson, & Semel, 2013).

The 1960s were years of upheaval and change. Commissioned by the United States Commission on Civil Rights, the Equality of Educational Opportunity Study (EEOS), by James Coleman (1966), studied outcomes represented by test scores for African American children. Coleman concluded from the national data and from his research that African American children who went to predominantly white schools would do better than children who were in segregated all-black schools. His research also supported the argument that race and family background would predict educational and life outcomes for children growing up in the United States, especially in the cities. His findings supported the great need to enact the civil rights laws and policies for racial integration of local schools. In 1968, the Kerner Commission Report reported on the causes for the civil disturbances in cities across the country, citing the danger of “two Americas—one black and one white.” As part of the solutions the commission focused on the inequities in what would later be termed “hyper-segregated” urban communities (Wilson, 1997; Massey & Denton, 1993); and on eliminating the wide gap in educational achievement (based on educational access and investment inputs) between white and black students in the United States. Both Coleman’s EEOS study and the Kerner report findings supported integration of local schools, not only as a means of redress to past

inequitable laws, policies and practices related to racial segregation in housing, employment, and education, but also to insure the strength and prosperity of the nation as a whole.

Both reports were issued during President Johnson's massive but short-lived "unconditional war on poverty" (1964–1974), which made education part of a broad-scale drive to attack and eliminate poverty and to improve economic, social, and educational outcomes for all citizens, especially the poor. Built on the ideology of the Chicago School of Sociology, the War on Poverty initiative sought to build cultural competency to reverse a *culture of poverty* (Lewis, O., 1959) through government support of grassroots citizen action in communities of severe poverty and through many programs designed to help individuals develop marketable skills, civic knowledge and activism, and political power. Of note are the establishment of Head Start (1965), and enactment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Sadovnik et al., 2013). These programs and policies were founded on the idea that social conditions and national well being for all United States citizens were closely related to outcomes in literacy and education. Social, health, and educational services and inputs for those children affected by poverty were seen by the Johnson administration as key to overcoming the negative effects of poverty and to insuring better individual and community success. Engagement and "voice" of local communities in addressing poverty-related problems was also key to the overall initiative.

With substantial federal funding for states and local districts and communities, Head Start and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act were directly aimed at improving educational outcomes—Head Start for early childhood, and the Elementary

and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) for K–12 public schools. The ESEA is important as it serves as the basis for the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (enacted in 2002). The ESEA includes Title I and many other mandates and supports for improving the academic success of children in low income communities. These include extra academic support and tutoring in math and reading, field trips to connect learning with experience, funding for parent involvement and leadership development, and other supplemental assistance to close the achievement gap and prevent low income students from dropping out of school before high school graduation (www.k12.wa.us/esea). With increasing cuts to Title I funds in recent years, the founders of BRICK have sought alternative funding for these types of critical supplemental services initially supported by Title I funds.

Fifty years later (2013–14), education researchers such as Anyon (1997, 2005), Berliner (2006), Rothstein (2004a, 2004b, 2007) and Ladd (2012), Coley and Baker (2013), Baker (2012) all argue that complex, poverty–related social conditions—including access to employment and livable wages, safe affordable housing, access to healthy food and health services, and hyper–racial and class segregation—collectively contribute up to 60% of the causes for the academic achievement gap. They argue that without addressing these broader related social issues—in addition to educational funding equity issues—closing this gap on a large scale basis through school efforts alone will not succeed.

As researcher Sean Reardon of Stanford University explained recently in *The New York Times*: “We have moved from a society in the 1950s and 1960s, in which race was more consequential than family income, to one today in which family income appears more determinative of educational success than race” (Tavernise, 2012, p. 4; quoted in

Coley and Baker, 2013, p. 8). These issues were all extremely relevant to the BRICK Avon Academy case study.

Political discourse regarding education shifted again in the early 1980s during the Reagan administration with the publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* commissioned by the United States Department of Education. The report shifted the focus of national competitiveness and education reform away from social and economic justice reforms and their links to educational outcomes, and back to academic achievement and what was needed for schools to be effective and accountable (*A Nation at Risk*, 1983; Sadovnik, et al., 2013). The report emphasized that America's economic future as a global leader was at risk if our students failed to meet and/or outperform the academic levels of students in other countries, especially in literacy and math. Attention was drawn to the decrease in achievement over three decades and the gap in academic performance between races and classes; i.e., the achievement gap. *A Nation at Risk* outlined a list of key items for school reform: the critical role of teachers, curriculum, parents and community; and the need more time spent in schools (Sadovnik, et al., 2013) as drivers of school reform for national well-being. This list of key components reflects the effective schools theory (Edmonds, 1979), and looks a lot like the components for school reform enacted in the last decade in both No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) and Race to the Top (RTT, 2009). Teacher quality (or lack of quality) was cited in the *A Nation at Risk* report as a key reason for the mediocre performance of American students and the failure of United States schools to be competitive on a global level. The report suggested that United States teachers were predominantly from those in the bottom 25% in achievement scores of college graduates,

while other nations recruit their best and the brightest students with top scores to be teachers (Sadovnik, et al., 2013; *A Nation at Risk*, 1983). This key finding probably influenced the thinking and action of many leaders and future leaders, including Wendy Kopp, the founder of Teach For America (TFA), discussed later in this paper. *A Nation at Risk* also served as a catalyst for an increase in business, corporate, and private sector involvement and investment in public education. Business terms such as “accountability” and “measurement” to document success (and failure) became more and more common in both educational and political reform terminology and discourse.

Although many of the federal programs created during the war on poverty decade continued into the 1980’s and up through today (e.g., Head Start, ESEA, Title I) there was a decided political shift regarding education and politics overall beginning in the 1980s called the New Federalism. This was the beginning of a shift away from federal control towards state control of education, and toward a bottom up and top down approach. By 2000, a shift began back toward federal control of education under NCLB and RTT (Sadovnik et al., 2013).

The issues of immigration, migration, and population growth are another major factor in the concern about the achievement gap based on poverty and race. The Great Migration of African Americans from farms in southern states to the cities in northern states (1940–1970) brought millions of new, mostly poor urban residents seeking a better life (Lehmann, 1992; Anyon, 1997; King, 2000). Newark became home to 161,000 of these hopeful newcomers; 69,000 came in the decade of 1960–1970, replacing the 100,000 whites leaving for the suburbs during the same period (Anyon, 1997) from a city of approximately 400,000 in 1967 (Anyon, 1997). Newark was also a new home for

many Puerto Ricans who migrated to the mainland. The enactment of the Immigration Act of 1965 brought large numbers of immigrants to the United States for the first time since 1923 (Portes & Rumbault, 1990; King, 2000; Ludden, 2008). Population studies at the turn of the 21st century revealed that although a majority of United States students were achieving on par and above the levels of students from other developed countries, poor and minority students were severely underperforming in comparison to their peers (Belfield & Levin, 2007). A large number of both documented and undocumented immigrants accounting for the United States population growth were persons of African, Caribbean, and Latino descent, and this was true for immigrants to Newark in the past quarter century. Population researchers predict that by 2030, people of color will outnumber Caucasians in the United States for the first time in the country's history (Tienda & Alon, 2007; Belfield & Levin, 2007). Furthermore, a large number of this growing group were also among the subset of population living in poverty and failing to achieve academically, as shown on national and global literacy and math standardized tests (Belfield and Levin, 2007; Tienda & Alon, 2007; Darling–Hammond, 2010; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Researchers emphasized the sense of urgency for improving academic outcomes for all children by showing that the growing numbers of poor children of color in the “new majority” who were failing academically would be a tremendous economic expense and drain on the nation. If this problem was not remedied the loss would lead to fewer middle–income earners/taxpayers; increased health costs (with health outcomes closely correlating to educational outcomes) and increases in other related areas such as public entitlements, crime, incarceration, and more (Bailey, 2007; Belfield & Levin, 2007;

Rothstein, 2004).

Over this entire period (1950–2000), the completion of the shift from an industrial economy to a post–industrial, global economy had a profound influence on the population, resources, and quality of life in large urban centers. This shift added to racially biased government policies, such as federal housing acts (1934 FHA home mortgage insurance; 1937 public housing; 1944 VA mortgage loans that accelerated urban flight/suburban growth; 1949 urban renewal/slum clearance, which were in effect until the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the creation of the Fair Housing Act (1968) that prohibited racial discrimination in housing) (<https://www.hud.gov/offices/adm/about/admguides/history.cfm>). Federal legislation such as these resulted in increasing racial and economic segregation, abandonment of cities by the middle class, and decreasing employment in urban centers (Massey & Denton, 1993; Williams, 1997). The need for advanced skills and education for finding employment would help drive the need and urgency for educational reform (Darling–Hammond, 2011; Ferguson, 2007a; Ravitch, 2010; Belfield & Levin, 2007; Friedman, 2005; Anyon, 1997).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Ronald Edmunds began the research now known as *effective schools theory and research*. This was partly in response to the theory that educational outcomes were primarily outcomes of social conditions, race and class (Coleman, 1966). The question Edmunds set up was, “Why are some schools successful and other schools failures in the same poor urban communities?” His research sought to identify what components made schools effective and how it was demonstratively possible to successfully educate all children, despite their social or economic circumstances. (Effective schools theory will be discussed in more detail later in

theoretical frameworks.)

Another growing educational reform movement in the 1990s and into the new century was a movement for a more holistic, comprehensive model to assure academic achievement by addressing the needs of children, particularly in underserved communities. The Comer comprehensive school reform model addressed the multiple areas of child development and engaged the school as a community of caring adults to meet those developmental needs—cognitive, emotional, physical, psychological, social, and emotional (Comer, 1996). Dryfoos (1998) suggested that schools that brought community services into schools to address student and family needs were community school models for school reform: Geoffrey Canada in Harlem (Tough, 2008) followed by a Broader, Bolder Approach (Noguera & Wells, 2011; Ladd, 2012) made further connections between community engagement and development and school reform.

Research-based comprehensive school reform models (CSR) were invested in heavily by the federal government. Hundreds of millions of federal dollars went to both CSR creators and to schools implementing these models in the mid-1990s and early 2000s (ESEA Title I and Comprehensive School Reform Program [CSRP], 1998). This signaled a change from ESEA Title I remediation for the poorest students to the idea of comprehensively addressing all students in failing schools in high-poverty areas, by using research-based, replicable models that could show improvement in test scores. Driven by academicians, these included such models as Success for All (Slavin & Madden, 2001, John-Hopkins University); Accelerated Schools (Levin, Stanford University [now Columbia]); Coalition for Essential Schools (Sizer, 1992, Brown University [now Oakland, CA]); Comer Schools (Comer, 1996, Yale University); and

Core Knowledge (Hirsch, 1995,1996, University of Virginia). Meta–studies suggested that those effective CSR models that showed results did so only after at least five years of implementation of the model (Borman, Hewes, Overman, & Brown, 2003). (Note: In New Jersey, despite the Abbott v. Burke mandate for adoption of CSR models by all Abbott districts/schools, few schools in the Newark Public Schools district received funding to sustain the CSR programs for five years. Any that did were not evaluated as such.) In the next decade and a half (2000–2015), federal funds were legislated for comprehensive reform initiatives such as Promise Neighborhoods to encourage communities to link school and community planning and resources together, modeled after the Harlem Children’s Zone model (Tough, 2008).

Indeed, the initial push for the current federal education agenda in the decades surrounding the turn of the century was driven by leadership from both political parties, first led by the National Governors Association (headed by Governor Bill Clinton), then by President Clinton’s Goals 2000 (Sadovnik, et al., 2013) and then by a Republican administration (George W. Bush) through No Child Left Behind (2001). This agenda was upheld and further developed by President Obama through Race to the Top (2009) by using funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment act of 2009. This bi–partisan support for an education reform platform has the language of both conservative and progressives. It thus blurs political lines and falls within a rhetoric known as neo–liberal policies and educational reform. While espousing parental choice and educational equity for all children, the neo–liberal reform uses conservative marketplace capitalist language and strategies to promote competition. Neo–liberalism, often employs progressive terms and concepts investing in innovation and privatization of schools (including charter

schools), entrepreneurship, business–like efficiency and standardized test outcomes to drive a change in the infrastructure of public education (Sadovnik, et al., 2013; Ravitch, 2010).

The Context of Current Reform

From 1980 to the present time, there has been an increasing growth of what is termed *neo-liberal* influence in education reform and policy movements. As the term suggests, the political view uses much of the terminology of liberal reformers, but with quite different meanings. Just as the new federalists adopted the verbiage of the liberals and their war on poverty, but turned to their own more moderate or conservative aims to lessen the role of federal government in local government and in private life, the neo-liberals use the language of liberals but with their own twist toward privatization of education and toward individual accountability (of teachers, students, parents, etc). This approach for individual accountability can place blame on various individuals or groups of individuals for failure in academic achievement—be it teacher, principal, student or parent—without paying attention to the social and economic conditions that influence outcomes. Research clearly demonstrates that health and health outcomes influence educational achievement (Brookes–Gunn, Duncan & Morrison, 1993) and that economic and social conditions influence educational outcomes (Rothstein & Wilder, 2008; Berliner, 2006; Anyon, 1997, 2005; Wilson, 1997).

David Hursh (2007) traces the new neo-liberal political agenda in United States beginning with the Reagan administration and continuing through both Democratic and Republican administrations as a driving force into the present. Hursh argues that a Keynesian economic view consistent with democratic socialism (FDR to Johnson) was

replaced by a market driven economic neo-liberal approach consistent with globalization and a globalized economy (Reagan to Obama). In this neo-liberal view, systems such as health, economics, social welfare, housing, labor, education, all formerly shared with government, must be deregulated and privatized and thereby made efficient in order to be competitive in a global market (Hursh, 2007). Standardization by measurement is viewed by neo-liberals as a way to show efficiencies. Hursh demonstrates how neo-liberal politics are fully embedded in No Child Left Behind, embraced by both political parties. They were fully enacted as an educational model for replication nationwide in New Orleans, after Hurricane Katrina, when education was deregulated from government to privatized control in one fell swoop (Hursh, 2007). Hursh argues that:

NCLB ... exemplifies the transformation in the dominant discourses on education and society, as societal institutions are recast as markets rather than deliberatively democratic systems (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004; Young, 2000). They show how NLCB, like other recent education policies promoting standardized testing, accountability, competition, school choice, and privatization, reflects the rise and dominance of neoliberal and neoconservative policy discourses over social democratic policy discourses. Furthermore, neoliberals range from those who endorse the rationale of competition and accountability without appreciating the larger shift in societal discourses to those who aim to remove government from any responsibility for social welfare. Neo-liberals argue that increased globalization gives us no alternative to focusing on increasing efficiency through testing, accountability, and choice. (Hursh, 2007, p. 494)

Hursh argues that using standardized testing is not an effective strategy for the goal of closing the achievement gap. He illustrates the differences between Deweyan education as the driver of societal democratic discourse for the general welfare of humankind and neo-liberal globalization discourse which views education as the driver of an open marketplace through the diminution of government and social democracy.

BRICK Avon Academy grew out of neo-liberal reforms of the time, including

national reforms such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top (RTT).

The Federal Context of Current Reform: No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top

The overarching goal of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) education reform legislation passed by Congress in 2001 was to close the achievement gap based on race and class and have every child in the United States performing to high academic standards by 2014. NCLB legislation is basically the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965) that emphasizes equal access to education and establishes high standards and accountability (<https://www.k12.wa.us/policy-funding/grants-grant-management/every-student-succeeds-act-essa-implementation/elementary-and-secondary-education-act-esea>).

Because public education in the United States is a state (not federal) responsibility constitutionally, the NCLB federal legislation mandated that states set their own standards and benchmarks to meet the requirements of this legislation in order to continue receiving federal funding (Title I, IV, etc.). Each state was made responsible for setting its own educational standards and for measuring progress toward those standards, utilizing state standardized tests to test all students annually in grades three through eight, and at least one test for Grade 10–12 in high school. Mandates for failure to meet proficiency standards (as set by each state) and sanctions for failure to meet proficiency standards were outlined in the NCLB federal legislation. The standards also required schools to have highly qualified teachers in all grades and core subjects by 2005–2006. Each school had to meet proficiency standards by sub-groupings of students by race and ethnicity; economic disadvantage; special education; gifted and talented; and English Language Learners (ELL); and require a minimum of 95 percent participation by each

subgroup population. If a school failed to meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) proficiency on academic achievement by any grade level, or by any of these sub-groups, it would be labeled as a *School in Need of Improvement (SINOI)*. Continued failure to make AYP and to meet the benchmarks could result in school closure. Finally, these schools were mandated to advise all students and parents of the school's failing status, and advise students about high performing schools to which they could transfer.

Under NCLB legislation, schools that failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress for five consecutive years are forced to choose a more radical intervention action to turn around their chronically failing status. Turnaround options under NCLB law include:

- Transformation (Reorganization)—change the principal but keep over 50 percent of the faculty and staff
- Turnaround (Restructuring)—change the principal and over 50 percent of the teachers and staff
- Close–Reopen (Reconstitution)—close the school and reopen it under new management, with new staff as a new school; often with a reconstituted student body as well
- Close the school permanently

Similar to the reforms leading up to it, NCLB included accountability and reform tenets which include: high expectations by teachers and staff for all students; high quality teachers—including teacher evaluation reform and flexibility in hiring and collective bargaining for reform efforts; additional time in the school day and school year as strategies for reform; encouraging innovation through market competition of charter

schools and education management organizations; and leadership as a key to success in achieving goals.

NCLB: Borrowing a Theory of Change and a Reform Model from Business

The four mandatory restructuring options under NCLB (Transformation; Turnaround; Close–Reopen; and Permanent Closure) were adopted from business. One of the business models used when a business is failing to meet its production goals is to use a turnaround intervention strategy, to eliminate the failure by changing those persons involved in leading and working in the company, especially in top and middle management. The idea is that by replacing those involved in the failure of the business to produce the desired goals and outcomes, new leadership will have a fresh start on tackling problems and challenges associated with that failure to achieve. This turnaround model was presented by business to education policy makers who adopted it as an intervention tool to fix schools that chronically fail to improve the educational outcomes for their students (David, 2010).

NCLB and Turnaround Schools

BRICK Avon Academy was a turnaround school and therefore needed to be examined in the context of these broader national reforms. The term *turnaround* is used in a number of different ways in current education reform discourse. It is important to clarify those ways and their meanings in different contexts. First, one of the options for reform for a chronically failing school under NCLB is called *turnaround*, or choosing the model in which the principal and over 50 percent (up to 100 percent) of the staff of a failing school is changed as a mandatory part of the reform. This terminology has continued under Race to the Top. *Turnaround* is also the overall business model for

restructuring failing organizations, which was adopted for reform in NCLB referring to changing the outcomes largely through changing human personnel. Finally, *turnaround* is also used to signify the strategies and practices used for turning around a chronically failing school in a quick timeframe and in order to produce large positive outcomes in academic performance, often involving restructuring the leadership and staffing of a school.

“*Turnaround* is the emerging response to an entirely new dynamic in public education: the threat of closure for underperformance” (Calkins et al., 2007, p. 8).

“*Turnaround* focuses on the most consistently underperforming schools and involves dramatic, transformative change. ... the school must improve or it will be redefined or closed” (Calkins et al., 2007, p.10).

Wong and Klopott elaborate that:

Turnaround Strategy is a method used to completely overhaul failing schools. Creating the right policy environment is critical to successful school turnaround. The studies discussed in this section examined the condition under which school change has been successful ... including the accountability policies which are a critical component of the Turnaround Strategy. (2012, p. 61)

Two key foundational aspects to successful turnarounds are leadership (at the school level) with district support (Fullan, 2006) and the environmental context (Rhim et al., 2007). “Their review of the literature suggested that an ‘accelerated timetable, the freedom to act, support and aligned systems, performance monitoring and community engagement’ are associated with successful turnarounds” (Wong & Klopott, 2012, p. 62, citing Rhim et al., 2007). Research showing positive outcomes for using a turnaround strategy in either business or in education is extremely limited, especially research that shows sustained positive outcomes.

The Scope of the Problem

In 2005, 12,000 schools nationally out of 100,000 fell into the NLCB “In Need of Improvement” category (Calkins et al., 2007, p. 16). It is estimated that approximately 5,000 schools made up the nation’s poorest performing, chronically failing schools (Calkins et al., 2007). There were 1,100 schools in restructuring by 2007. By 2011, nearly 6,000 schools were in restructuring (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2011). The body of research termed “school turnaround research” specifically related to NCLB began to emerge and increase after 2007. The Education Trust sponsored best practice research to highlight case studies of schools that were successful in turning around failure despite conditions of poverty and associated Social Economic Status (SES) challenges (Chenoweth, 2007). Relatively few have been traditional public schools. The Carnegie Foundation commissioned the *School Turnaround Field Guide* (2007) and Mass Impact Educational Research Group in Boston began publishing a number of key papers based on their partnerships and work with turnaround schools.

Of the approximately 6,000 schools in turnaround by 2010, 74% of schools chose the transformation model, 20%, the turnaround model, and only 2% closed permanently (Lachlan–Hache et al., 2012). Only 10% of those schools choosing the “turnaround model” were re-opened under a charter or lead partner. The examples of chronically failing schools in high poverty areas that have become high performing—or even average performing—schools are few and far between. These schools tend to reflect entrepreneurial characteristics (Calkins et al., 2007) and to operate outside the norm and in spite of being within large bureaucracies.

The Consortium for Chicago School Research (de la Torre et al., 2012) was able to report that over four years of implementation in Chicago, turnaround schools did

reduce the achievement gap by 50% in reading and by 66% in math as compared to non–turnaround Chicago Public Schools; but they add a disclaimer that the ability to sustain these gains beyond four years is not yet documented (de la Torre et al., 2012).

The Cost to Turn Around a Failing School

Mass Insight began its study with a look at schools in large districts with large numbers of turnaround schools, including Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. Mass Insight states that \$250,000 to \$2 million a year is required to turn around a failing school (Calkins et al., 2007). Federally funded School Improvement Grants (SIG) help support these costs. Turnaround schools/districts awarded federal SIG grants to implement their proposed transformational turnaround plans receive the funding for up to three years. Because the first year of awards for SIG funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was for the 2010–2011 school year, and schools have been forced to reorganize for chronic failure under NCLB only since 2007, the research about outcomes for these restructured schools has generated a small but rapidly growing body of literature. (Certainly there is research about failing schools that were transformed into schools with high performing students, but many of these were before NCLB and before the prescriptive sanctions and strategies mandated under that reform legislation.) Research showed that for many NCLB turnaround schools receiving SIG grants, increased scores could only generally be documented for one year. “Increased scores appeared to be the result of the combined effects of extra money, reduced class sizes, planning time, professional development, new materials, and parent choice and commitment, along with a national search for teachers” (Rice & Malen, 2010, cited in David, 2008, p. 80).

There has been such “churn” created especially in urban communities in the past five or six years with schools transforming and/or closing and sometimes new schools opening, that it seems difficult to find meaningful longitudinal studies about sustained outcomes (Calkins et al., 2007). Furthermore, until 2013, most information was reported only at the school level, making it difficult to find data that showed influence on scores disaggregated to the individual student level. In other words, if a school reported increases in standardized achievement scores from fourth to eighth grade over the past three to five years, there was no measurement of individual student progress, only progress (or slippage) by groups of students who might or might not be predominantly the same students from year to year. While this meets the type of reporting called for in NCLB, it does not show whether progress at the student level is meaningful, especially in schools with high student mobility rates. The Consortium for Chicago School Research (CCSR) did disaggregate scores to student level to control for changes in standardized tests, but still reported on outcomes for schools as a whole (de la Torre et al., 2012).

Turnaround: What Works and What Can Be Sustained

At the school level, much of the research continues to focus on what’s working in schools that were failing and are now succeeding, and much of this builds on large bodies of education literature and theory from the past forty years. These areas include leadership, and leadership specific to turnarounds; teacher knowledge and professional development, and teacher evaluation; classroom management; teaching and learning in the classroom; using data and assessment to guide differentiated, child-centered learning and mastery of skills, especially in literacy and math; curriculum, pedagogy and the

vertical and horizontal alignment of learning goals at the school level, across classrooms; school climate and the learning environment; and parent and community engagement and partnership. Professional development must meaningfully support each teacher's practice along with time and support for reviewing data together with colleagues and reflecting together about what works and why, and what is not working (Auerback, 2012; Fullan, 2007; Ash, 2000; Darling–Hammond, 1997). Teacher evaluation rubrics tied to student performance, incentive pay, merit pay for student performance, are all areas of growing research. These areas will be covered in more depth under the Effective Schools theory framework.

How to Measure School Turnaround

Mass Insight Education and Research Institute (2010c), hereafter referred to as Mass Insight, suggests the following metrics be used for measuring school turnaround data and using it as an ongoing part of the mapping and guide for those engaged in the turnaround process:

- demographic data: including grade enrollment, race/ethnicity, gender; % English Language Learners (ELL); % special education; % gifted & talented; % economically disadvantaged by school lunch Title I status (all NCLB tenets); and adding an additional metric for % potential first generation college graduates (p. 5);
- school environment data: daily attendance rate; truancy rate; drop out/retention rate; number of suspensions; student stability (% moving in and out during the year); site visit or quality review scores (indicators of long-term success especially measured in Years 1 and 2 of turnaround) (p. 5);

- student achievement data (p. 6);
- perception data including student and teacher perceptions of: school safety and culture; student engagement academic expectations; parent community engagement; and community understanding of school turnaround (p. 6);
- human capital and instructional data (p. 7); and
- facilities and resources data (p. 7).

Research about System Capacity for Turnarounds

Many reports and studies have been issued about the results of turnaround schools in general under NCLB. *How* some schools are able to turn around from chronically failing schools to being well on the way to high performing schools is still a central question. In addition to local school intervention strategies, successful turnaround is also interactive and dependent to a greater or lesser degree on how districts and states support turnaround schools (Sparks, S.D. 2012; Wong & Klopott, 2012; Mass Insight, 2010a; Rhim et al., 2007).

Another study reflects the reluctance of private and for-profit educational management organizations to partner with large school districts to turn around existing, chronically failing schools. CEOs of over 25 organizations cited their belief from experience that large districts will not allow the independence and authority that is necessary to do what is needed (budget, hiring, curriculum, etc.). Most of these CEO's operated charter schools that operate outside of the traditional public school bureaucracy (Calkins et al., 2007, p. 104–105). One exception is the Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) in Chicago. AUSL is an Educational Management Organization (EMO) created in partnership with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) in 2001, first as an

alternative urban teacher training residency model for mid-career professionals, and then as a growing manager of turnaround schools within the Chicago Public Schools system. It is now a very large EMO, operating 29 neighborhood public schools in Chicago in neighborhoods with demographics very comparable to BRICK Avon Academy in Newark. However, it differs from BRICK not only as a teacher residency training organization (having trained over 550 teachers in residency since 2002), but also in the autonomy they have within the CPS system (AUSL website: <http://auslchicago.org/about>; CCSR 2012).

No Child Left Behind (2001) accountability based and outcome based reform research “indicates that although there have been some improvements ... the achievement gap has not been substantially diminished. And NCLB goals to eliminate the gap by 2014 will not be met” (Sadovnik et al., 2008).

Critics of NCLB argue that although the goal of eliminating the achievement gap is laudable, there is inadequate funding provided to improve failing schools and it is heavy on punishment and falls short on providing support and resources to build school capacity (Sadovnik et al., 2013, p. 517). Also, those schools with high mobility rates are punished for something mostly out of their control. Additionally, until there is a way to show value added for schools that increase the proficiency levels of students significantly, schools are labeled as failures when they may be making substantial and successful progress were the analysis disaggregated to the student level (Sadovnik et al., 2008; Sadovnik et al., 2013 p. 518).

Another group of school turnaround studies and tool kits focuses on the district level capacity and commitment needed to support local school turnaround and to support

associated changes in practices in the district. In order to make the large scale changes needed to turn around failing schools, districts must support clusters of turnaround schools to create learning communities on a larger scale—to capture what’s working, and to focus institutionally on supporting turnaround schools with resources to meet identified needs across the system (Mass Insight, 2010a). Research directly focused upon specific large urban district efforts and strategies for turnaround include Chicago (Bryk et al., 2010); Philadelphia’s Renaissance Schools (Gold et al., 2012) and Boston’s Pilot Schools (Tung & Ouimette, 2007); and Urban District Turnaround Partnerships (Mass Insight, 2010a). No large urban district to date can show wide-scale, sustained success in closing the educational achievement gap, or for turning around failing schools and sustaining the outcomes over time (de la Torre et al., 2012; Rhim et al., 2007). There are a few smaller urban districts such as West New York, New Jersey, which are lone examples of whole district success (Kirp, 2013). “Turnaround requires dramatic changes that produce significant academic gains within two years. There is little track record of turnaround success at scale...Turning around chronically under-performing schools is a different and far more difficult undertaking than school improvement. It should be recognized within education—as within all other sectors—as a distinct professional discipline that requires specialized experience training and support” (Calkins et al., 2007, p. 4).

The state’s role and its capacity to support districts in turning around failing schools is another area for needed research, reform, and alignment. A national study in 2005 for the Gates Foundation looking at how states were working in partnership with districts and schools to help turn schools around “found there were no states doing well at

this” (Calkins et al., 2007, p. 2). In a multi-study project on identifying sustainable school turnaround, researchers from the American Institutes for Research (AIR), collaborating with Policy Studies Associates, the Urban Institute, and Decision Information Resources (Sparks, 2012), released results of four inter-connected longitudinal studies of 750 chronically low-performing schools in three states (Florida, North Carolina and Texas) done by the Society for Research in Educational Effectiveness (September, 2012). Researchers used their own independent method to identify the lowest five percent of schools in each state and to track progress from 2003–04 to 2006–07. They developed a way to track student achievement for individual students in these schools’ highest grade over that same period. About half of the identified schools showed some signs of improvement within three years; another 35% showed no increase in student achievement or growth. “Fifteen percent of schools were considered true turnarounds. They improved the number of students reaching proficiency in math or reading by at least 5 percentile points, with student growth rates in the 65 percentile statewide” (Sparks, 2012). The study also looked back at performance during the last three years of the study to insure that early improvement continued over time. Results showed that turnaround school outcomes varied significantly state by state. Schools were much more likely to improve poor math performance of students than reading performance. Only three to four percent of all schools were able to improve student achievement in both subjects at once. These schools were “more likely than other schools to report low turnover of highly qualified teachers and more technical assistance with data use.” Jennifer O’Day, an AIR principal educational researcher not included in this project, was critical of the low reading achievement improvement at these schools,

especially with the coming enactment of the Common Core State Standards “which focus on literacy across the curriculum” (Sparks, 2012). In another associated study with this project, Turnbull and Arcaira at the Policy Studies Associates in Washington, DC conducted case study interviews at 36 schools in 18 districts across three states (Sparks, 2012). Findings showed that data use, targeted student interventions, and teacher collaboration were the most common strategies cited as critical to successful turnaround schools, while schools that did not improve cited using new curriculum or professional development. Digging deeper into interviews was important to distinguish what people said vs. what they knew and were actually doing. Most of the improving schools tended to combine strong leadership and data use with strong management and support of human resources (recruiting, sustaining, supporting) and intensive professional development, defined as “ongoing throughout the year and specific to issues raised in the school’s turnaround plan” (Sparks, 2012). Just under 20% of schools that did not improve reported “too many strategies being used,” challenging the sense of coherence and leadership and giving the researchers a different sense in the way school staff described the efforts, and “more than throwing multiple reform efforts at the school.” Again, schools showing improvement tend to have both accountability pressure and district support for their turnaround efforts (Sparks, 2012).

School Improvement Grants (SIGs)—Supporting School Turnaround

As discussed later in the present study, BRICK Avon Academy went through the application process during their first year of implementation (2010–11) and received a \$2 million federal SIG award for three academic years (2011–2014).

Under NCLB legislation, Schools in Need of Improvement (SINOI) were

supposed to get extra support from districts, state, and federal sources for their efforts to reach Annual Yearly Progress, and to move out of the failing category. From 2002–2009, a small amount of federal funding (\$3 million) was available for this purpose. Although legislation for School Improvement Grants to support the work and extra resources needed to turn around chronically failing schools was passed in 2006, no funds were legislated for this purpose until its inclusion in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2009) under President Obama. Under the act, \$3 billion was legislated for SIGs. The first round of SIGs were awarded for the 2010–11 school year to 831 schools (of 2,172 urban, minority, persistently failing schools identified by states). The average grant award was \$2.54 million over three years (Lachlan–Hache et al., 2012, p. 5). By 2011, over 831 schools (Tier I and II) had received federal School Improvement Grants, and were in the process of restructuring for turnaround (Lachlan–Hache et al., 2012). (Another group of 416 low performing schools [Tier III] received lesser grants averaging \$258,000 over three years.)

Outcomes in Student Achievement in SIG Schools

Have schools that have received SIGs, like BRICK Avon Academy, improved student outcomes? There have been a growing number of recent studies about the outcomes of NCLB progress for the turnaround schools with SIG grants. Klein (2012) looks at studies and investigates further the outcomes of 1,200 schools that received the first SIG grants after the end of the second year, with very mixed results. A United States Department of Education study found that out of about 700 of the schools in their second year of their SIG program, a quarter posted double-digit gains in math, and another 20 percent showed similar progress in reading, during the 2011–12 school year. Some of the

other SIG schools that hadn't seen big jumps in achievement were beginning to glimpse a new school culture, including discipline and attendance, and good student reports about safety and learning (Klein, 2012). United States Secretary of Education Arne Duncan reports that proficiency in reading or math by students at 700 of 800 SIG-awarded schools went up roughly 60 percent in the first year of the SIG grant (U.S. Dept. of Education, Hurlburt et al., 2012).

SIG studies also showed some schools/ districts used 30–35% of the grant money to pay for consultants, with the average expenditure on consultants across SIG grants estimated at 24% (Klein, 2012). There is not very good measurement or analysis of how consultant roles are tied (or not) to improvement in student achievement at the SIG schools. Fourteen states have offered districts screened lists of approved consultants and providers to help support districts and principals. Human resource requirements for NCLB turnaround/SIG grants are the toughest for most districts and schools to meet, including recruitment for 50% or more of displaced teachers, and the implementation of the teacher evaluation systems. The U.S. Department of Education extended the deadline for full implementation of the teacher evaluation system until the 2013–14 school year (Klein, 2012). Finding qualified new hires for principals and for over 50% of the faculty for one or more of a school's teachers is a challenge for many districts. The results in some districts are an influx of many first time teachers, brand new to teaching, or use by districts of national organizations like Teach For America. Strategies to float principals between SIG schools was also a strategy reported by several districts with multiple SIG grants. Other interventions—like adding learning time to the day and year—have also been difficult to implement with collective bargaining units in some districts. Some

schools report using SIG funds to add before– and/or after–school tutoring or learning time to the day (Lachlan–Hache et al., 2012; Klein, 2012; Hurlburt et al., 2012).

Mixed reviews and criticisms of the SIG grant programs and results suggest that many would like to see the federal requirements for turnaround models and interventions made more flexible for state and local decisions. One of the biggest questions for practitioners and policy makers alike is how to sustain gains after the funding is gone (Ravitch, 2010; Klein, 2012).

Race to the Top (RTT)

President Obama created the Race to the Top initiative, with its primary goal to assist states in meeting the NCLB components and requirements. RTT funds were given to states to support their efforts to improve student outcomes and close the achievement gap through specific strategies: adopting standards to support students academic success for college and the global economy; building data systems to help track progress in student outcomes for reporting and for use by teachers and schools to support student success; recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers and principals, especially in high risk schools; and turning around our nations lowest performing schools. This legislation and funding for RTT was included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, giving the federal Department of Education an initial \$4.35 billion to fund federally approved state Race to the Top plans. While allowing the states to create their own Race to the Top plans, the legislation required that plans demonstrate how each state was making progress toward meeting the key goals of NCLB and specified key elements that had to be met by states to qualify for the massive amounts of federal funding made available for education through this legislation. These specific,

mandatory key elements included the development and adoption of new teacher evaluation systems; adoption of new Common Core Curriculum Standards and testing; continued support for innovation and competition in education, especially for charter school expansion; levers for reform, such as merit bonuses for teachers based on performance and student achievement outcomes; waiving of collective bargaining agreements in order to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers to craft the new teacher evaluation process; and adding instructional time to the school day/year. The agreement of both state and local administration and collective bargaining units required to gain the points needed for federal approval of the RTT application was a challenge for many states and districts, like New Jersey and Newark (Sadovnik et al., 2013).

Summary of School Reform to Close the Achievement Gap

Urban, and sometimes rural, communities with high percentages of poverty are the places for many of the nations most failing schools. Low literacy levels and low high school graduation rates are concentrated in poor, mostly urban communities suffering from generations of hyper-segregation, high unemployment, and poverty (Wilson, 1996, 2009; Ravitch, 2010; Neckerman, 2007; Rothstein, 2004; Orfield et al., 1997; Rumberger, 2011; Sadovnik et al., 2013). A survey of 50 states by the Center on Educational Policy found that “urban districts disproportionately feel the effects of NCLB” (Renner et al., 2006; quoted from Wong 2012, p. 63–64).

The pernicious problem of academic failure, and the growing percentages of citizens especially in poor urban communities who did not graduate from high school, or who could not read on a 9th grade reading level, was an alarming truth. A number of researchers and institutions began to calculate the high monetary costs to the nation and

to taxpayer in the 21st century when students do not complete high school and fail to gain proficiency in math and literacy (Belfield & Levin et al., 2008). Many educational researchers also emphasize the need to begin education earlier with high quality, early childhood education as a key strategy to successfully closing the achievement gap (Ferguson, 2007; Kirp, 2011; Belfield & Levin, 2007).

In summary, from the turn of the twenty-first century to today (2000–2013), the political, largely neo-liberal tenets that pervade school reform discourse are accountability (school, teacher, individual); school choice (charter schools and vouchers); high stakes testing (now Common Core); and consequences for failure (school restructure/closure). Because so many schools were deemed failing (Schools in Need of Improvement) under No Child Left Behind, some politicians suggested that they must be inefficient schools. Many schools adopted a business model, and business language has been adopted by educational reformers—reformers who are guided to evaluate success by efficiency, standardized test scores, and measuring outputs, regardless of the environmental and social circumstances of the students. With mixed reviews about the outcomes of these broad reforms focused primarily on schools (not neighborhoods or economic reforms), it is important to consider several state-initiated school reform efforts that parallel national ones.

The New Jersey Context: Public Education and School Funding

During the period 1981 to 2008, New Jersey took a significantly different route for urban school reform, focusing not on accountability and reform, but on equality and opportunity as exemplified by the *Abbott v. Burke* school finance decisions. The *Abbott v. Burke* New Jersey Supreme Court case was a landmark educational equity case that

has stretched in all of its appeals over 30 years. The class action suit for Abbott (re: Raymond Abbott and the other children listed as plaintiffs) was filed by the Educational Law Center of New Jersey against Burke, the New Jersey Educational Commissioner when the case was filed in 1981. The first two rounds of Abbott formed the basis for all of the other appeals and dealt with the failure of the State of New Jersey to provide a thorough and efficient education for tens of thousands of poor children, as guaranteed in the state constitution. The New Jersey Supreme Court decision (Abbott II, 1990) addressed disparities in school funding between more affluent and low-income municipalities. Most of the children and 28 districts represented were from the state's biggest and poorest (and property poor) urban districts, like Jersey City, Newark, Trenton, Camden, Paterson, East Orange, Atlantic City, and Elizabeth, along with some low-income rural districts (later expanded to include 31 Abbott districts). From 1997 to 2007, New Jersey launched some of the most far reaching and innovative educational reforms, including free, public universal early childhood for all 3 and 4 year olds in the 31 Abbott Districts (the first such effort in the nation); a mega funding plan for addressing the schools' old and inadequate facilities in both Abbott and non-Abbott districts; comprehensive school reform; and myriad other services targeted at reform in the urban schools. Some reforms, especially early childhood education, were found to be more effective than others. In 2008, the New Jersey School Funding Reform Act (SFRA), signed by Governor Jon Corzine, instituted a weighted formula, which was found unconstitutional in subsequent Abbott appeals, and by May of 2011 (Abbott XXI) the state supreme court again ruled in favor of poor children, saying that the state's failure to fund SFRA caused "instructionally consequential and significant" harm to at-risk

students in districts across the state. The Court also found that the harm to NJ schoolchildren from the funding cut is not a “minor infringement” to their right to a thorough and efficient education, but “a real substantial and consequential blow” to that right. In Abbott XXI, the Court ordered that the formula be fully funded in FY12 for students in the 31 high-need, urban districts (<https://edlawcenter.org/litigation/abbott-v-burke/abbott-history.html>).

Newark’s Context for Education Reform

Newark is New Jersey’s largest city, with a population of 277,140, an increase of 3,600 over 2000 (U.S. Census). Once a booming industrial, manufacturing, shopping and cultural center, Newark’s story parallels that of many United States urban cities over the past fifty years. Decline of industry and factory jobs, federal policy encouraging the flight of white and middle class to the suburbs, and the hyper-segregation of low income minority and immigrant populations (Massey & Denton, 1993; Anyon, 1997; Abu-Lughod, 1999; Wilson, 1996, 2009; and Tuttle, 2009) led to a city plagued by high joblessness, school drop out rates, and violence and crime. Located in the second wealthiest state in the United States, Newark—one of the poorest cities in the country—is surrounded by high-income communities in Essex County and its northern neighbor, Bergen County. Like New Jersey, Newark is a highly segregated city, one with 95% of the population of African and Latino descent. Among Newark’s continuing assets and strengths, in addition to its people, is its location as one of the largest ports on the United States eastern coast and as an international hub in the New York metro region, including Liberty International Airport. Prudential Insurance’s international headquarters has anchored downtown Newark, along with local, state and federal government offices,

several universities (including Rutgers, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Seton Hall Law School, and Essex County College), hospitals and trauma centers, and major arts and cultural institutions.

Education and Reform in Newark

Once boasting the best schools in the country in the mid-20th century, Newark schools faced growing challenges as the city's economic prosperity and racial and class diversity declined. In opening this section, it is significant to note the overlap of several major education reform forces that sometimes aligned and sometimes conflicted with one another. Specifically, the *Abbott v. Burke* decision which made New Jersey one of the strongest states in education and educational funding equity (1990–2007); the state's takeover of local control of NPS schools (1995–present); the enactment of state *Abbott* remedies (1998–present); No Child Left Behind (2001–2012); SIG grants (2009–present); Race to the Top (2009–present); and the adoption of the Common Core Standards nationally and in New Jersey (2010–present). A related influence on neighborhood schools, especially those located in the Central Ward of Newark, was the demolition of over 5,000 units of high-rise public housing from the early 1990s to 2005. At the very least, this influenced a steep drop in enrollment in schools in these neighborhoods.

In 1995, the State of New Jersey took governance and operation of Newark Public Schools away from local control. Newark joined two other state-controlled districts: Jersey City (1989) and Paterson (1991). While Newark citizens continued to elect members to what was formerly the NPS Board of Education, the state-appointed superintendent held final say in all matters involved in running the schools, including

budget and finance, and personnel. At the time of the present study 2014, there was no change in status. Newark Public Schools were still under state control after nearly twenty years, despite numerous and ongoing attempts to win back local control of the schools. (Note: Schools were returned to local control in 2018, which is addressed in Chapter 14.)

Dr. Beverly Hall from New York City Public Schools was the first state-appointed NPS superintendent, appointed by Republican Governor Christine Todd Whitman in 1995. One major reason cited in the Level III monitoring report that led to state takeover of NPS was related to financial expenditures. “The Newark Public Schools was the second largest employer in the city,” Dr. Hall noted in an address, “and its primary job was to provide and develop jobs for a city in economic decline. The ultimate victims were the 45,000 children who attended Newark’s 82 public schools. Only eight of those schools had 50% of its youngsters reading at grade level (CETAC *Myths and Realities*, May 2000).” During Dr. Hall’s tenure (1995–1999), Abbott appeals by the Education Law Center in Newark were ongoing in the Supreme Court of New Jersey, with Abbott V early childhood and other sweeping program reform mandates issued in 1998. Dr. Hall introduced school-based clinics and full service community schools into NPS as one innovative intervention and strategy for educational improvement. Upon Dr. Hall’s departure to Atlanta (1999), there was such a public outcry for local input into the selection process for the superintendent that the Governor appointed a panel of local leaders to oversee and advise the selection process with the New Jersey Commissioner of Education.

Marion Bolden, the second state-appointed superintendent in Newark (1999–2008), was an insider, with a forty-year career at NPS beginning as a math teacher. As

superintendent, Mrs. Bolden accomplished a clean bill for the district's fiscal accounting, a citywide high school youth center, and many other innovations and collaborations. During her tenure, Abbott V school reform mandates and funding poured into the district (along with extensive state monitoring requirements not required in other locally controlled Abbott districts). These initiatives included:

- whole school reform initiatives;
- the enactment of universal early childhood education for all 3- and 4-year-olds;
- the development of community-based and school-based partnerships, centers and supplemental services (health, afterschool partnerships, etc.);
- and the school-wide facilities assessment and design project to prepare for new buildings or repairs to school buildings averaging 80 to 100 years old (Abbott VII, 2000).

Hundreds of millions of dollars were expended in Newark and other Abbott districts. While longitudinal studies showed positive outcomes, especially for the universal early childhood education mandate and outcomes by third grade (Friedy et al., 2007; Barnette, 2007), public sentiment seemed to focus upon the enormous expenditures and overall achievement outcomes which still lagged far behind achievement in non-Abbott districts.

Dr. Clifford Janey was appointed to lead NPS in 2008 by Democratic Governor Jon Corzine. With input from the community, Dr. Janey crafted and shared a strategic plan for NPS called "Great Expectations" in Spring 2009. This plan was both a response to local needs and in step with NCLB. One of the NCLB goals was to support innovative

education models focused on improving academic outcomes. Dr. Janey issued an open invitation to those inside and outside NPS to propose models that would improve outcomes for Newark children. One of these innovative proposals was BRICK, the focus of this dissertation case study. Another was a partnership with Pedro Noguera and Lauren Wells, from New York University, for the Broader–Bolder Approach (BBA) Global Village initiative. BBA was based largely on Geoffrey Canada’s Harlem Children’s Zone model (Tough, 2008), which was also the model for President Obama’s Promise Neighborhoods federal legislation and funding. Janey had begun to implement the strategic plan when the new Republican Governor Chris Christie announced at the end of Janey’s second year (in Spring, 2010) that he would not approve an extension of Janey’s three–year contract, ending in June 2011.

Governor Christie, who had long argued that the Abbott funding to Newark had little or no effect, was a proponent of neo–liberal reform. Ms. Cami Anderson was selected by Republican Governor Christie to replace Janey as NPS superintendent beginning in summer 2011. Anderson was a logical choice for Governor Christie, Commissioner Cerf, and Mayor Booker, a fit both for their political agendas and by her neo–liberal pedigree. Anderson’s entire career was tied to neo–liberal reform efforts. She was a Teach For America alumna, and later joined the TFA executive team in New York. She worked for New Leaders for New Schools (Russakoff, 2014). Anderson came to Newark from New York City, where she served under Joel Klein as a deputy superintendent for special programs for the schools, including special needs populations (Russakoff, 2014). Anderson had worked closely with Newark Mayor Cory Booker on his 2002 campaign, and they had developed a respect and friendship with one another

(NY Times, May 3, 2011; Russakoff, 2014) prior to her appointment in Newark.

Anderson was also a Broad Fellow. Anderson announced that she would continue to use and implement Janey's *Great Expectations Strategic Plan* for the schools. In addition to using this plan, Anderson secretly contracted Cerf's company's for an audit study as a basis for which schools should be closed (leaked to press in winter, 2011). The audit study was performed for Newark Public Schools by Global Education led by Christopher Cerf, who was nominated by Governor Chris Christie (fall 2010) to become the state Commissioner of Education (January 2011), directly overseeing Newark and other state-controlled districts (Russakoff, 2014).

From 2012–2014, NPS state superintendent Anderson closed over a dozen neighborhood elementary and high schools in poor, mostly African American communities, often allowing charter schools to rent or buy the closed buildings. Anderson also launched a plan to break up neighborhood based districting (and support charter schools) by launching her One Newark plan. All parents with school-age children were asked to rank their school choice for fall of 2014, including schools which Anderson had closed as district schools and invited several charter school groups to run (Russakoff, 2014). Six of these neighborhood elementary schools that were to be closed and/or run by charter schools (of fourteen total South Ward schools) are nearby BRICK Avon Academy. Three additional schools (of the fourteen) have charter schools co-located in a shared building, leaving only five of fourteen neighborhood elementary schools in the South Ward fully district schools for the 2014–15 academic year. The district plan was to close and reorganize both comprehensive high schools that South Ward elementary schools feed into. This plan was placed on a two-year (outcome based)

moratorium for at least one of the two high schools (Weequahic High School), when the active alumni organization intervened with Superintendent Anderson. Subsequently, the alumni association's leader stated that he was not certain if there really was a moratorium because the principal has been told to cut over \$1 million in faculty from the budget, and the alumni organization had never been allowed to meet directly with Superintendent Anderson (only with delegates who then leave the district).

Recent Newark Politics and Education

Cory Booker came to Newark in 1997, was elected Councilman in 1998, and rose in elected public service to become Newark's two-term Mayor in 2006 (2006–2013). Booker, elected as a United States Senator for New Jersey (November, 2013), has always been a school choice and charter school advocate, sitting on the boards of organizations such as E-3, and at least one charter school early in his Newark public service career. His national network (Stanford, Yale Law School, Rhodes Scholar, etc.) and visibility brought Newark into the spotlight as a reform-minded city. Booker attracted a much-publicized commitment for education reform funding in Newark from Mark Zuckerberg, the young millionaire founder of Facebook. Zuckerberg's gift of \$100 million was contingent upon \$100 million matching funds to be raised by Booker from other private sources (NY Times, 9/27/10; Russakoff, 2014). Eventually, the largest portion of the funds were to be used to support a change in the Newark Teachers Union (NTU) contract (March 2013) to provide a \$10,000 merit bonus for any teacher who was rated outstanding under the new teacher's evaluation (first awarded at the end of the 2013–14 school year).

From 2000–2013, and especially under Governor Christie’s tenure (2008–2014), charter schools have grown in Newark and have nearly doubled over those six years during his tenure to 25 charter schools (2013); and from serving less than 1% to over 16% of the total 48,000 student population in Newark (NJ Charter Schools Association, 2012). The rapid growth in charter schools in Newark has caused traditional public school enrollment to drop, creating a staffing, budgeting and facilities challenge for the district, with diminished student enrollment in many traditional neighborhood public schools. Anderson planned the closing of a number of public school buildings against community protest. Charter schools have been allowed to use (rent and possibly purchase) a number of these schools (Russakoff, 2014). In 2014, Anderson announced plans to lay off 400 teachers a year for the next two to three years (layoff of at least 700 teachers), in order to correct the over-staffing of teachers on the district’s payroll. (In addition to the increase of charter schools and the related decrease in NPS student population, the NPS district continued to hire new teachers without letting go of any veteran teachers, leading to the current situation of NPS overemployment of teachers.) Anderson’s staff went to the State Department of Education with a \$986 million budget for the 2014–15 school year. This budget reflects over \$200 million (over 20% of the total district budget) to be paid to charter schools. By the opening of schools in fall of 2014, it is projected that 1 in 4 students in Newark (12,693) will attend charter schools, up 2,000 from this current school year (Mooney, April 7, 2014; Waters, April 9, 2014). (Note: the charter school population in Newark has continued to increase, as will be described in Chapter 14).

Table 2.1*A Context Timeline of Events in Newark Public Schools (1995–2009)*

Date	Date	Event
1995		State takeover of Newark Public Schools (NPS)
1995		Appointment of first state–appointed superintendent of NPS, Dr. Beverly Hall, a veteran from NYC public schools
1996		Cory Booker first visits Newark
1997		Cory Booker moves to Newark during his last year of law school at Yale
1997 and 1998		Abbot IV and Abbott V: Supreme Court of New Jersey mandates comprehensive school reform and universal early childhood education for all three– and four–year olds in Abbott districts; also facility remediation and replacement and supplemental services
1998		Cory Booker runs for and wins Central Ward Councilman seat
1999		State appoints Marion Bolden as second state–appointed superintendent of NPS
2001		No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation passed by U.S. Congress, signed into law by President George W. Bush
2002		NCLB enacted
2002		Cory Booker runs for mayor and loses against Sharpe James (who wins 5 th 4 year term
2006		Cory Booker runs for Mayor and wins first 4 year term
2007		Governor Jon Corzine appoints committee to advise selection of new state–appointed superintendent for NPS
2008		President Obama elected U.S. President
2008	July	Dr. Clifford Janey recommended by Committee and appointed by Governor Jon Corzine as new superintendent for NPS
2008		Governor Corzine Signs the Quality Education Schools Funding Act
2008		Dominique Lee, founder of BRICK, invites NPS Teach For America (TFA) alumni to consider founding BRICK
2009	Spring	Dr. Janey releases NPS “Great Expectations” Strategic Plan to community
2009	November	Republican Chris Christie elected NJ Governor (term begins January 2010)

Teach For America (TFA)

Just over a decade after Edmonds coined the term and launched “effective schools” research, and less than a decade after *A Nation at Risk* pointed to the problem of mediocre educational outcomes due in part to failure to recruit the best and brightest students as teachers, Teach For America (TFA)—now a growing reform initiative—was born out of a senior thesis of a young Princeton University student. This is significant as background information because all six founders of BRICK Academy are TFA alumni who served in TFA in Newark between 1993 and 2007. Additionally, during the second and third years of operation, approximately 25% of BRICK Avon faculty members had TFA backgrounds.

In 1989, Wendy Kopp wrote her senior thesis at Princeton University proposing an initiative to address the need for high quality teachers in low performing schools. After graduating, she started the organization (1990) called Teach For America. The central argument was that given the critical importance of education to individual and national outcomes, every child in America should have access to an excellent teacher. This right, according to Kopp and her organization, is the definition of educational equity. Kopp’s idea was to recruit the best and the brightest students newly graduated from the best American universities. Applicants were willing to commit to teach in underserved schools for a minimum of two years—a sort of domestic, education Peace Corps—to give underserved children in failing schools the opportunity to have a bright, dedicated teacher who believed in them. These newly graduated scholars would not have teacher training or teaching certificates, but would believe in and have high expectations

for all of their students, regardless of economic/social background. The TFA organization would offer a summer of intensive teacher training (5weeks), ongoing in-service training and support, and a paid placement as a classroom teacher in a public school system in a poor urban or rural setting. TFA got waivers from districts (on a state by state basis) for these non-certified teachers, often tying in an alternate route teacher certification process to the experience (Kopp, 2008).

In many ways, the BRICK model promoted TFA beliefs and values by honoring the teacher as a primary leader in schools. Like TFA, BRICK used language such as “relentless; energetic; no quitting; no giving up,” and this included student success on academic assessments and standardized tests. The TFA model puts teachers at the heart of education excellence, access and quality, and puts the highest emphasis on reaching and supporting every child to acquire skills needed to achieve successfully. TFA and related models, like BRICK, advocate that *human capital* is key to turning around schools, and they espouse that high achieving college graduates from elite schools are key to the quality of teaching and outcomes most needed in teachers by children, especially those in chronically failing schools.

The TFA model is now over 20 years in operation, with over 20,000 alumni. Additionally, TFA has been used as a model for both local and international organizations. TFA encourages alumni to stay connected, and thus supports a network of highly motivated, highly educated, and in many ways, like-minded individuals across a plethora of professional fields. This can be a powerful force, as will be discussed.

Criticism of the TFA program includes concern that upwardly mobile, untrained (in teaching) young people cut their teeth for training at the expense of poor children and

then move on. The first decade of TFA was also criticized for its lack of diversity. The majority of TFA teachers leave the teaching field once their two-year term of service is over. While there seems to be a paucity of non-TFA sponsored research publications, there are a few independent peer-reviewed research studies. TFA has been criticized for turnover, and the low numbers of TFA alumni who remain in teaching. It can be said, based on a TFA longitudinal alumni study, that in 2007 at least 16.6% of TFA alumni remain in K–12 teaching beyond their two years of service (Miner, 2010; Heilig & Jez, 2014, p. 8). 28% of TFA alumni remain in public school teaching after five years (Donaldson & Moore Johnson, 2011; Heilig & Jez, 2014), compared to 50% of new non-TFA teachers. TFA claims that 50% of alumni remain in educational careers. A 2011 study claims that 15% (7) of 49 top for- and not-for-profit educational entrepreneurial firms are founded by TFA alumni (Higgins et al., 2011). For example, the founders of KIPP (Knowledge is Power) Charter Schools are TFA alumni (including Kopp's husband); the founders of other more local charter school networks (Texas, California, etc.) are also TFA alumni. Michelle Re, a controversial mayoral appointment as a past superintendent of the District of Columbia Public Schools (after only a couple of years of teaching experience), was a TFA alumna (Higgins et al., 2011). Cami Anderson, former state-appointed Newark Public Schools superintendent (2011–2016), was another TFA alumni.

As a national organization, and despite its critics, TFA has grown exponentially. Research has shown mixed results about the success of students taught by TFA teachers. Darling–Hammond co-authored a Texas study that found TFA math teachers less effective than college-trained/certified math teachers (Darling–Hammond et al., 2005;

Darling–Hammond, 2000). Two peer-reviewed studies reviewed with criticism by Heilig and Jez (2014) show positive effects of TFA teachers upon student achievement (Xu et al., 2011; Institute for Education Sciences Mathematica, 2008). Heilig and Jez cite continuous research showing that TFA teachers do less well than newly trained certified teachers. Furthermore, they examine TFA teachers' attrition rates and estimate significant cost to taxpayers for high new teacher turnover.

Wendy Kopp has built a powerful organization nationally which expects to have 25,000 active teachers in service by 2016. In addition, Kopp has created several spin-off organizations: an international organization, and a national 501(c)(4) non-profit organization (Leadership for Educational Equity, or LEE) that currently has \$300 million in endowments. LEE is now poised to sponsor TFA alumni to run for political offices across the country. "Some 27 TFA alumni are currently in office, nine more are running for office, and more than 700 are interested in pursuing political leadership. TFA has a goal of 100 elected officials in 2010 (Miner, 2010)." LEE has made generous fellowships available to sponsor TFA alum to shadow national educational leaders and policy makers in order for them to take on major leadership roles. For instance, staffers paid by TFA work for senators in Washington DC (Miner, 2010).

The six founders of BRICK (the educational management non-profit organization) who were also founding leaders at BRICK Avon Academy were all TFA alumni from TFA cohorts ranging from 1994 to 2006. One difference between the BRICK founders and many TFA alumni was that the BRICK founders all completed TFA in Newark and continued on as teachers in the Newark Public Schools after completing their term of service. Additionally, almost all of the TFA alumni teaching at

BRICK Avon in 2014 have five or more years of NPS teaching experience. Responding to an invitation to Newark TFA alumni by BRICK visionary founder, Dominique Lee, the BRICK founders shared a long-term commitment to Newark students and formed BRICK because they hoped to create success for students from within the system, honoring teachers as learning partners and leaders. They took on a challenge to create a world class school in their neighborhood in Newark and within the public school, traditional neighborhood school system. Their experience and network with TFA is a part of their story worth mentioning.

TFA is an important and still growing neo-liberal reform initiative aimed at teacher quality, which became an important part of federal, state and local education reform. TFA is also related to massive school closings across urban schools, as urban districts contract with TFA for new teachers who do not cost the district the salaries of seasoned, often expert veterans in public schools. TFA plays a major role in the privatization of districts (such as New Orleans and Philadelphia) where TFA acts as a means of “union busting” in charter and/or alternate schools (see research and criticism above). In New Jersey, Governor Christie’s Urban Hope Act allowed large urban districts to partner with Educational Management Organizations (EMO) like BRICK to create new district schools which cannot hire unionized teachers and staff. In exchange, they get 95% of per pupil funding for their budget (\$18,000, vs. \$14,000 for charter schools, vs. \$7,500 at BRICK Avon—Interview, D. Lee). Leaders of BRICK Avon Academy, along with other principals, were in a tough spot because all of their teachers are NPS and NTU union teachers, and if there was a layoff in the district, newer teachers would be the first to be let go. BRICK invested heavily in teacher training, and a number of their best

young teachers would be at risk if there is not any special waiver granted to the district by the state to circumvent last hired first fired union rules in the event of an almost inevitable layoff.

Summary of Literature Review

Closing the achievement gap between white students and students of color has been a driving force of education reform in the past fifty years. Its importance is linked to national competition in a global market as well as to the well-being of all United States citizens (Darling-Hammond, 2011; Ferguson, 2007a; Ravitch, 2010; Belfield & Levin, 2007; Friedman, 2005; Anyon, 1997). *How* to close the achievement gap—often called the “opportunity gap”—is an ongoing source of debate. While some efforts focus on the need to acknowledge and influence broader societal factors such as poverty and racial hyper-segregation which correlates to student achievement and life outcomes (Coleman, et al., 1966; Wilson, 1996, 2009; Anyon, 1997; Rothstein, 2004; Berliner, 2006) others argue that effective schools can support student outcomes in spite of social factors outside of schools (Edmonds, 1979). Some researchers factor in social and economic factors into effective schools models and approach (Bryk et al., 2010; Calkins et al., 2007). The Supreme Court of New Jersey’s Abbott v. Burke rulings did seek to address some of these broader social factors that influence educational opportunity by mandating funding and best-practice, research-based programs for such issues as universal and high quality early childhood education, supplemental services, and out-dated school facilities. Newark was a part of these educational equity reform efforts. Recent federal reforms such as No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top have emphasized school accountability and measuring student success through outcomes on standardized

achievement tests; on teacher quality, measured in part through student academic performance; and on increasing school quality and access in communities with chronically failing schools. This last reform strategy has been implemented both through mandated turnaround and/or closing failing schools, as well as by encouraging the growth of charter schools. Newark, with schools controlled by the state since 1995, is caught in the heart of current educational reform, as are so many other larger United States cities. Current reform, driven by neo-liberal views and wealthy private philanthropists and investors, seeks to dismantle what it sees as a dysfunctional bureaucracy of education and run schools more on a private business model (Hursh, 2007). Leadership and high quality, highly performing teachers are viewed as the human capital for effective schools and for closing the achievement gap (Auerbach, 2012; Zavadsky, 2012; Bryk et al., 2010; Fullan, 2007, 2006; Calkins et al., 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2010). Teach For America is a popular part of this new neo-liberal reform movement, addressing the human capital factor by attracting the highest achieving college graduates from the most prestigious universities into teaching assignments in the most educationally challenged districts and schools. Despite enormous public and private investments in these efforts—through federal NCLB SIG grants (like BRICK Avon Academy's grant) and RTT grants to states, and through initiatives like TFA—research reviews show mixed student outcomes at best, and little change for students at worst, related to these reforms and investments (Sadovnik et al., 2013). All of these societal and educational reform factors came into play at BRICK Avon Academy. The next section lays out a theoretical framework and literature review for the present case study at BRICK Avon Academy.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

Effective Schools Theory and Research

The founders of BRICK cite Bryk et al. (2010) in the BRICK model's framework and practice. Bryk and his colleagues' work emanates from effective schools theory and research, therefore a brief summary on this theory and literature is presented.

Coleman and other educational researchers in the late 1960s and 1970s concentrated on the effects of poverty and family background as predictors and correlates of poor student academic achievement (Coleman, 1966). Coleman's research, in part, showed the importance of social networks for eliminating poverty and its effects for those children and families trapped in it, as well as for the nation as a whole. Others, like Jensen (1969), supported genetic and racial causes for achievement differences in poor children.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Edmonds began the research now known as effective schools theory. He began it partly in response and as an alternative to the theory posited by Coleman (1966), Jensen (1969) and others who were focused on how the effects of poverty negatively influenced and predicted educational achievement outcomes for poor children. Edmonds posited instead the theory that educational outcomes were primarily correlated to *school effectiveness*, regardless of the poverty of the children or the neighborhoods these schools were located in. Based on empirical and mixed methods studies by Weber (1971) studying inner city schools in several states, Edmonds continued to refine methods to look at inner city schools that produce strong academic achievement, and find out what they had in common with one another (and in contrast with others that do not). Edmonds cites Weber's work as the "first contributor to school determinants of

achievement” in the field he led, which came to be known as *effective schools research and theory*.

Edmonds was a strong proponent of educational equity, and to him “equity” meant distribution of resources to the poor, including access to quality schools. Edmonds posited that every school knows how to teach, but similar to other fields, schools and teachers only teach those they feel are important to teach (those with more social and economic status), and that in a way this is the nature of humans and society. Edmonds argued that unless held accountable, ultimately through the politics of pressure from engaged stakeholders, humans usually don’t give 100% of themselves and their expertise equally to all people. For this reason, Edmonds suggested that schools should be held accountable for teaching and for student achievement. He argued that educators know everything they need to know to help all children achieve mastery of literacy and math skills, but that they do not hold high expectations for poor children. Edmonds argued that the elements that determine academic success (mastery of basic reading and math at a minimum of the average level of middle class students and schools in that municipality) were in the control of schools and determined by specific characteristics and practice of those schools, separate and apart from family background and diversity of students within the schools.

Edmonds and his colleagues did multiple studies, using large urban school databases from various large city school districts, first to determine schools with student populations with similar social backgrounds but with different school academic outcomes; and then going onsite to interview and seek more quantitative measures along with qualitative data. Like Weber, he found that several key elements were necessary

components of these effective schools. Note that these schools did not all implement anything in exactly the same way nor could they determine there was any set or common way that the schools achieved them, but rather that these certain elements were present in all schools whose students were academically successful as measured on standardized tests and compared with norms for all other students in that district and state. These components were:

- strong school leadership (which edmunds found included instructional leadership and support for teachers, students and parents);
- high expectations by teachers and administrators for all student's abilities to learn and master basic literacy and math skills;
- a healthy learning environment;
- excellent teachers (competent, experienced, knowledgeable in content area);
- parental engagement as partners involved with the school;
- focus on instructional goals aligned with instruction and student mastery of skills through many formal and informal means of teaching and assessment
- effective teacher support and professional development.

At least a portion of the effective schools research literature and theory is a driving force in No Child Left Behind, which holds the schools and teachers accountable for student achievement outcomes. What may be missing from the NCLB legislation is a deeper understanding of the relational and organizational nature and components present and necessary in successful effective schools in any neighborhood, and especially in the poorest neighborhoods.

The Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR): A Longitudinal Study of Effective Schools in Chicago

Because BRICK Avon cites *Organizing for Effective Schools* (Bryk et al., 2010) in their model, a bit of history of the sponsoring organization and their school research is included. Furthermore, Rutgers Newark has a research consortium (Newark School Research Collaborative) modeled on the CCSR in Chicago, under whose auspices this researcher conducted the present study.

Over the past 150 years, the University of Chicago built a tradition and a body of research grounded in the study of the local community. Beginning with seminal studies by sociologists such as Lewis Wirth, Lewis Mumford, educator Charles Dewey, and more recently William Julius Wilson, Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, and Pauline Lipman, sociologists at the University of Chicago have created and contributed to many theories relating to urban life by studying the community and its institutions on the ground based on actual practice and actual life situations. Out of this same tradition, a group of educational researchers including John Easton, Penny Bender Sebring, and Anthony Bryk started and expanded the Consortium on Chicago School Research at University of Chicago, partnering with Chicago Public Schools and the larger community to assist in research that could inform educational policy and practice (CCSR website).

In the 1990s, Chicago Public Schools went through a period of change, first decentralizing school governance and then adjusting back toward more centralization (Bryk et al., 2010). Bryk and his colleagues from the Consortium on Chicago School Research laid out some of the complexities of school organizations in *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago* (Bryk et al., 2010). This is an elaborate, mixed methods longitudinal study over ten years in the 1990s that seeks to quantify and analyze

in great depth some of the same components driving effective schools as those identified by Weber and Edmonds. They describe the foundation for their research as grounded theory emanating from what happens in the classroom and the school, a “theory of practice (Bryk et al.).” Instruction and the classroom are at the heart and “technical core” of the school and its purpose (Bryk et al., 2010, p. 47–48), where the focus is on cognitive and psychosocial relationships built between teacher and learners. Indeed, the classroom makes up its own subsystem and organization within the larger organization. If the teacher is the professional orchestra leader in each classroom, the principal is the professional conductor for the school as a whole organization. While their research builds upon the foundation of education reform literature over the past 50 years, and incorporates current research of the past decade, the CCSR goes further to analyze these essential supports for effective schools as interactive subsystems within the larger organization.

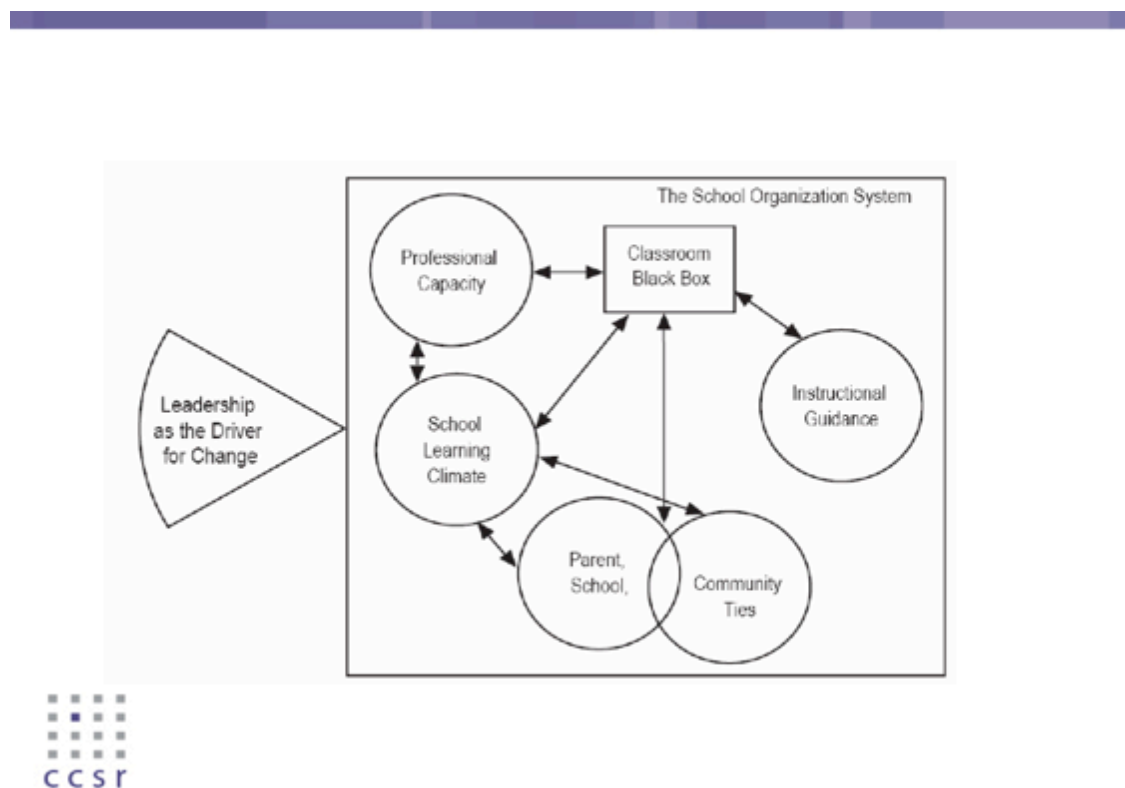
The organizational challenges for developing and sustaining effective schools are the systems and mechanisms put into place to connect the classroom to the school through four essential supports:

- the instructional guidance system: curriculum alignment; nature of academic demand; and tools to support it;
- the professional capacity system: teacher’s knowledge and skill; support for teacher learning–professional development; and the school–based professional community;
- the school learning climate: teacher’s academic press and personal support norms; order and safety; peer academic norms;

- parent, school and community ties: community institutional social support, direct services to school; parental press and support for learning; and school's efforts to engage and support parents.

Figure 3.1

A Framework of Essential Supports—Consortium on Chicago School Research



Note. Source: Bryk et al., 2010

Figure 3.1 shows the essential supports, or ingredients, for a healthy, well-functioning school, and a model for BRICK's implementation. The model emphasizes leadership and professional capacity and the importance of human resources as a lever for whole school change and change at the heart of the school, in the classroom. The school climate and the instructional guidance support the classroom and the relationships

between teacher and students. The relationships and partnerships with parents and the community also influence the school and the classroom. These key supports are interactive and all are essential to one another.

Bryk and his team liken the essential components for effective schools to the ingredients in a cake, ones that must all be present in the right strength and quantity if the cake batter is to have a chance to become a successfully baked cake. They also liken the environment (neighborhood, social capital) and school climate (including trust) as the “oven” in which the cake is baked and which must be functioning well enough to support the “baking” process to create and sustain an effective school. In a somewhat similar manner to the way Bronfenbrenner’s human ecology theory (discussed below) shows how human development is a function of complex interactions between inter-related social and environmental conditions, Bryk and team show the complexity of organizational development and change as a function of the interaction of complex social and environmental conditions and organizational outcomes in schools. Effective school organizations are about continual change and improvement. Bryk et al. use organic contingency theory as a model for the organic nature of the organizational development and function of the school as a living, changing organization made up of many people and dynamics. These complex, interactive *essential supports* serve as their own subsystems within the complex school organization.

Schools are complex organizations consisting of multiple interacting subsystems. Each subsystem involves a mix of human and social factors that shape the actual activities that occur [practice] and the meaning that individuals attribute to these events

... . In a simple sense, almost everything interacts with everything else (Bryk et al., 2010, p. 45).

The CCSR's in-depth research about human capital and social networks of parents (and various levels of parents' social networks relating to various levels of poor communities/schools) showed that the presence and interaction between these key components is critical in building and sustaining effective schools. Likening these key ingredients to a recipe for baking a cake, Bryk and his colleagues' extensive mixed methods research examines whether these critical ingredients are needed and present in an effective school and crucial to its positive academic outcomes for children. Bryk and his colleagues demonstrate that seemingly similar schools in similarly poor neighborhoods often have different academic outcomes, attributable to the presence or absence of these key ingredients. The social networks of low-income parents (church, work, families and friends) were able to help make the difference for schools in students' academic success. Each of these ingredients in effective schools are supported by extensive bodies of research and literature, as will be briefly shown later in this review.

Five Essential Supports for Effective Schools (Bryk et al., 2010): The Core Activity of Instruction and Student Learning

BRICK cites Bryk et al. and their essential supports in describing their BRICK framework. Effective schools theory today is used to support "what makes schools work," most often including in the definition those schools that can show strong academic achievement scores despite the odds. In the most conservative view, effective schools and educators in those schools can facilitate and ensure high academic outcomes for their students and leave no child behind with no failure and no excuses no matter what the odds. In reality, most educators in effective schools do not ignore the economic and

social needs of their students, but they do focus relentlessly and tirelessly upon helping students gain academic and skills mastery.

Most of the critical systems and components described in the effective schools research have bodies of research, theory and literature of their own. Here we will look at several of these: school leadership; professional development and learning communities; student-centered differentiated instruction and use of technology; parent and community ties and engagement; school climate; the extended day/year and the use of time as a lever for effective schools.

This current dissertation case study will rely heavily on the model and component models from the findings presented in *Organizing for Effective Schools* (Bryk et al., 2010) as a framework to present and interpret the data. Five essential supports in this framework are leadership, professional capacity, instructional guidance, a student-centered learning climate, and ties with parents and community, described in more detail below.

1. Leadership and Distributive Leadership

Leadership is the beginning and the continuing foundation of the BRICK model, in the forming of the leadership team whose members study together to look at best practices in research and in practice as they build their leadership team to develop their action plan. As they implement their plan to change a school from within, they seek to engage teachers and staff and others in ongoing leadership and continued building of leadership capacity.

Leadership

The first key support is the school leader, an essential element and determinant in educational outcomes at the classroom (instructional) level, at the school level (principal), and at the district level (superintendent) (Auerbach, 2012; Zavadsky, 2012; Bryk et al., 2010; Fullan, 2007, 2006; Calkins et al., 2007; Darling–Hammond et al., 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004; Edmonds, 1979). The first key support for an effective school generally refers to the on–site principal, who plays a key role in developing and sustaining an effective school whose students meet high educational expectations and goals. Bryk et al. call leadership “the driving subsystem for improvement (p. 61) ... how school leadership actually matters in the process of school improvement remains far less clear (in the reform literature).” Bryk suggests three broad areas of leadership: managerial, instructional, and facilitative–inclusive. The school leader is the face of the school and of the shared values both internally and in the community. This “head of the organization” leadership is key to any organization, especially complex organizations like schools, most especially in turnaround schools. In schools, leadership involves instructional leadership and support for teachers, managerial and operational support, as well as inclusive facilitating and promoting the vision, values and beliefs of the school for teachers and staff, students and parents (Bryk et al., 2010; Fullan, 2006; Spillane & Louis, 2006). Strong leaders invite engagement and individual and organizational learning (Senge, 1990; Fullan, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006), renewal and continual improvement (Goodlad, 1997; Fullan, 2006), and create the opportunity (time and support) for reflection on practice amongst teachers (Bryk et al., 2010; Fullan, 2001, 2006, 2007; Darling–Hammond, 2010; DuFour, 2004). These visible attributes and characteristics in a school leader are critical to supporting a process for improving

instruction and student outcomes, and for developing and sustaining a culture which promotes reflective action, and professional learning communities (Fullan, 2006; DuFour, 2006). Creating the culture of a community of learners requires leadership that engages and encourages participation and distributed leadership (Fullan, 2006). A good leader cannot create or sustain an effective school organization alone. However, no school organization can be successful without an effective leader who gains the respect of all stakeholders and builds a trusting relationship with them (Bryk et al., 2010; Fullan, 2006; Spillane & Louis, 2006).

BRICK's model depends on engaging others beyond the initial leadership team in leadership, planning, and decision-making.

Distributive Leadership and Developing Organizational Capacity

Sharing leadership at the organizational level in schools can be an effective way to develop ownership of the organizational goals, especially for a turnaround school (Fullan, 2006). "If teachers feel a sense of influence on decisions affecting their work, the necessary buy in for change is more readily established" (Bryk et al., 2010, p. 64). Again, there are many leadership roles—both formal and informal—which teachers can be invited to take on (Fullan, 2006). Curriculum decisions (evaluation, research, training), mentoring peers, assuming an organizational responsibility shared by the principal, are some ways. There are so many leadership roles—and so many pressures on teachers time and energy—that teachers should be encouraged to take on a leadership responsibility that interests them but is not a requirement (Fullan, 2006).

Distributed leadership can foster organic organizational development. When everyone is focused on student outcomes and well-being and on instructional

improvement and leadership toward those goals is encouraged, organizations can be dynamic and address needs as they emerge (Fullan, 2006).

Bryk suggests that organic contingency theory best describes the interaction of critical subsystems within the overall school that affects the course of the complex organizational development of a school. “This perspective argues that the most effective managerial form for an organization is contingent on the technical and environmental circumstances affecting the core work of the organization” (Bryk et al., 2010, p. 67). Organic management, and specifically inclusive leadership—enlisting the buy in and support of both teachers and community—seems to be appropriate to the school turnaround situation and the hope for sustaining change in an often unstable external urban environment” (Bryk et al., 2010, p. 68).

Organizational development research and theories are also of central relevance to turning around failing schools and to creating and sustaining effective schools. Creating a positive environment for learning, or “learning enriched schools” (Rosenholtz, 1985) is a complex process seen on an organizational level but dependent upon individual and group reflection and action focused primarily around instructional practice and continuous improvement in practice. Organizational learning is a process and a goal for strong performance in both schools and business (Salmond and Perkins, 1998; Cook & Yarrow, 1993; Senge, 1990).

2. Professional Capacity: Human Resources Subsystem

At the heart of the BRICK model is the teacher and the idea of building professional learning communities to increase professional capacity for all. This means adjusting the use of time to support this process, and engaging with one another in

continual discourse about best practices for instruction and meeting students' learning needs.

Teachers and Professionalism

The structure of schools makes teachers the instructional leaders of their classrooms. Teachers are key agents for student achievement: communicating learning objectives, delivering diverse content knowledge, building a relationship with each student in her/his classroom, and differentiating instruction to meet the learning needs of each student. Teachers' knowledge and teaching skills, experience and background, mental schema and beliefs (e.g., high expectations for students) and self-development are all central to student learning and academic achievement (McLaughlin & Tolert, 1990; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1997, 2000, 2010; Fullan, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006).

Professional Development and Creating a Community of Learning

Isolation of teachers in their classrooms is common (O'Day, 2007), and is the status quo in many schools unless conditions are changed to make reflection on practice with teacher peers possible. Efforts to remove some of the isolation and to invite more collaborative teacher learning to strengthen teaching strategies and to improve student outcomes often requires overcoming deeply embedded behaviors and addressing the lack of time set aside for professional development in schools, neither of which may be easily or quickly changed (Spillane & Louis, 2006).

Key to building the professional capacity of teachers are both the quality of professional development, and the climate and support for ongoing professional development, continuous learning and improvement. Teachers must be engaged beyond

the classroom in continuous improvement and reflection and learning as an organization (Bryk et al., 2010; Darling–Hammond & McLaughlin, 1999; Darling–Hammond, 1997, 2000, 2010; 1990; Fullan, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Wenger, 1999; DuFour, 2004; DuFour & Eaker, 1998, 2002).

Increasing Time for Instruction and Support

Creating *time* in the schedule is important for teachers to actively reflect on instruction and student outcomes. Allowing teachers the ongoing opportunity and practice to review and analyze assessments and data with other instructional leaders is important in order to improve and differentiate instruction with a focus upon student learning. This is a strategy that can help to build professional learning communities which are student–oriented and practice–based (Darling–Hammond, 1990; Firestone & Corbett, 1988; Seashore et al., 1999; DuFour, 2006; Fullan, 2006; Bryk et al., 2010). Teachers can be key change agents for organizational improvement if conditions—time, trust, respect, safety to confront practice and beliefs—are created and nurtured. These conditions support a culture for active reflection and organizational learning to develop as a part of daily practice in the school (Fullan, 2006; DuFour, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Goodlad, 1997) and for the teachers to be a “community of lifelong learners” (Barth, 1990).

3. Instructional Guidance

This domain connects directly to subject matter and instruction, the arrangement of the curriculum, and what and when and how content is taught and learned, sometimes called the “content map and sequences” (Bryk et al., 2010, p. 50). Establishing both horizontal (grade level) and vertical (across grades) alignment is important work, in order

to guide expectations both for what is taught and when, and what should be achieved by the learner. Three components of instructional guidance include: 1) “the arrangement of subject matter content and pacing over time, grades, and across classes”; 2) clarifying goals and expectations for “the intellectual depth expected of students as they engage in subject matter”; and, 3) “the learning tasks assigned to the students” (Bryk et al., 2010, pp. 52–52). “The second and third elements often combine with one another in practice.” Newmann (1996) refers to “authentic instruction” as that which authentically engages students in using their skills and understanding to analyze subject matter, solve problems, and communicate with one another in the process. Newmann found that students demonstrated stronger skills and a deeper understanding when exposed to authentic pedagogy (Newmann et al., 1996). Other research showed that “students learned 78% more math between the eighth and tenth grades than did students at other schools” who were not exposed to authentic pedagogy (Lee & Croninger, 1995). Bryk et al. (2010) adds the importance of the necessity for higher standards today than 30 years ago, as schools must prepare students to participate and lead in a global, knowledge based world.

The key data used to measure effectiveness by the Chicago Consortium team were standardized literacy and math scores and attendance data.

4. Student Centered Learning Climate

The environment and climate for learning is a powerful factor in the effectiveness of schools. “The social psychology of a school is an integrative product of the beliefs, values, and actual everyday behaviors among school professionals, parents, and students. This subsystem can have profound effects on student motivation and engagement with classroom instruction” (Bryk et al., 2010, p. 59). Each student’s relationships—student–

teacher and student–student—influence the student’s engagement and motivation to learn. Within this school environment, order and safety, teacher’s high expectations and personalism, and supportive peer norms all influence the learning climate within the school.

Establishing order and norms often takes a major effort during the first two years of turnaround (Bryk et al., 2010). Many studies confirm the importance of feeling safe and secure to a human’s ability to function normally and to learn. In urban environments where violence in the community and many other situations threaten personal and community safety, creating a safe and orderly environment in the school is key for everyone, students, teachers and staff, and parents, but especially for students.

The connection and influence of the student–teacher relationship is key to instruction. Teachers and staff must hold high expectations for each student and all students (Bryk et al., 2010; Fullan, 2007; Kopp, 2001; Darling–Hammond, 1997; Meiers, 1995; Edmonds, 1979). Teachers must utilize their own knowledge and ability to engage each student in deep learning, problem solving and analysis. Teachers have different connections and relationships to each student, and when teachers work together in a student–centered learning environment, they can support students’ learning by relying on one another’s strengths and relationships to maximize engagement and motivation (Darling–Hammond, 2010; Bryk et al., 2010).

Finally, the peer to peer relationships and expectations and beliefs of students for one another have a strong influence on the positive and/or negative learning environment in the classroom, and students’ engagement, motivation, and press to learn (Bryk et al., 2010, p. 74).

5. Ties with Parents and Community

Partnering with parents and the broader community was taken seriously at BRICK Avon Academy. Because of the many challenges faced by students and their families, this was an ongoing, and often difficult, challenge. It was, however, viewed as essential to student success. BRICK sought out partnerships and support services with other organizations to help them better meet the needs of their students and families.

Parental Engagement and Partnership Influences Student Achievement

Students are more motivated and engaged (Eccles, 2008) and learn more when schools support parents to be engaged to support student-centered learning through a variety of avenues. Schools support parents to engage students in many ways. Parents support learning in the home, such as reading, homework, guided instruction on-line and other learning activities outside school. Schools help parents to understand the learning goals for their child/grade through parent learning opportunities, such as volunteering at the school; encouraging open communication between parent and teachers, administrators and school staff; and by creating opportunities for parent voice in decision-making at the school (Epstein et al., 1997; Fullan, 2007).

Positive parental engagement and support have strong effects on student learning and on supporting a healthy student-centered learning climate. Building trust and partnership with parents can be critical to sustaining school stewardship and success. Parents can leverage their own social networks to help the school meet the needs of students (Bryk et al., 2010) and they can be important advocates for schools in this time of political and reform “churn” and change (Lipman, 2003).

Children who are in environments that promote the development of positive self-esteem, trusting and nurturing relationships, and empathy, build resilience and internal protective factors. These internal assets and coping strategies help youth as they develop and face risk. When parents (home), schools and community work together to create these supportive environments, children benefit (Resnick, 1993, 1997, 2000).

Teachers' Knowledge About Their Students Influences Student Learning Outcomes

This knowledge influences teacher capacity to support student learning, as well as the teacher–student relationship. The strength of this aspect of a teacher's knowledge can influence the balance of power and equity in the school and student outcomes (Delpit, 1995). This understanding also affects a teacher's ability and capacity to connect with individual students for teaching and learning. While Bryk et al. state that this element could have been included with human resources and professional capacity, he states that placement here allows it not to become lost in all the other elements of that component. This understanding has also been shown to influence the achievement and motivation of students (Delpit, 1995; Bryk et al., 2010).

Support Services and Partnerships with the Community are Critical for Student and School Success

Lack of access to services in the community (Dryfoos, 1998) and a multitude of factors related to poverty that influence student learning (Dryfoos, 1998; Quinn & Dryfoos, 2009; Patillo–McCoy, 1999, p. 206; Bryk et al., 2010; Fullan, 2006) can create an urgent need for services that districts often do not provide or have resources to provide. This places the onus on the individual school and school leader to develop partnerships with organizations and institutions in the community who can give access to

these services to students and families. These may include efforts by school personnel to identify and provide access to myriad health (physical and mental), food, housing, and legal services which are critical to a student's basic needs. Providing information and/or access to these services for children at the school may allow the school to focus more on teaching and learning, or prevent crisis, and may also serve to facilitate student learning and academic achievement (Dryfoos, 1998; Quinn & Dryfoos, 2009). For example, partnering with health care organizations and professionals at the school may help provide children and families access to services for asthma management, dental services, and/or mental health services that are not otherwise available to them. Lack of access to these services can lead to increased episodes of illness and an increase in absenteeism—all correlated with lowering student achievement and learning.

Other partnerships are preventative in nature. In communities where violence and crime is high, especially in after-school hours, youth development organizations such as the YMCA, Scouting, and Boys and Girls Clubs can provide safe, developmental and enriching activities for students in out of school hours. These organizations may be willing to create programs with schools to meet specific needs, such as extra tutoring and/or mentoring, or sports. These activities promote student development and enhance learning and achievement (McLaughlin et al., 1995; Bryk et al., 2010; Dryfoos & MacGuire, 2002; Quinn & Dryfoos, 2009).

High Performing, High Poverty (HPHP) Schools Research Provides a Model for Turnaround Theory, Emerging from Effective Schools Theory

BRICK Avon Academy was striving to be a high performing school in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Newark. This effective schools theory suggests that if a school is operating effectively, *high poverty* demographic factors can be mitigated or overcome

and students will be academically *high performing*. The existence of these HPHP schools—sometimes also referred to as 90/90/90 schools—suggests that there should be “no excuses” (Reeves, 2006) for failing to support high academic student outcomes. In addition to the CCSR in Chicago, researchers looking at high performing, high poverty (HPHP) schools include Deborah Meiers (1995, 2002); The Education Trust and Karin Chenoweth (2002, 2007); the American Federation of Teachers (1998, 1999); the American Institutes for Research (1999); Carter, (2000); Connell (1999); U.S. Department of Education (1998, 2001); 90/90/90 by Reeves, (2003); Calkins et al. (2007); Raglan, et al. (2002); and CPE/Caliber Associates (2005). Further studies dig into various aspects of HPHP, such as studies of successful urban turnaround principals (Orr et al. 2005); dynamics of teacher quality (Ingersoll, 2004); the correlation between student engagement and academic achievement (Finn & Owings, 2006); and the importance of close adult relationships and role models for poor students (Brooks–Gunn et al., 1993; Shear et al., 2005). Despite the research, these HPHP schools are still “exceptions,” and schools that have sustained turnaround success are still few and far between.

Research and policy organizations such as Mass Insight have developed a turnaround theory, building upon effective schools research with research findings from High Performing High Poverty schools to suggest a broader model for taking turnaround to scale. Their model also insists on a response by educators to conditions of poverty that influence student learning. They point to HPHP Schools as models demonstrating the strategies that districts, states and schools should collaboratively emulate to have a strong shot at broader, more consistent turnaround efforts and outcomes. Beginning with

strategies that address students' poverty-related "deficits," the strategic approaches are called "ready to learn; ready to teach; and ready to act" (Calkins et al., 2007). In this model, HPHP turnaround schools must identify and adopt strategies to address the influences of poverty on children in order to support students who are ready to learn. These strategies include extended school day and year; action against poverty related adversity; discipline and engagement; and close student–adult relationships. Readiness to teach includes shared responsibility for student achievement, personalized instruction using diagnostic assessment and flexible time on task, and a teaching culture that stresses collaboration and continuous learning and improvement. Readiness to act includes the ability for leaders at the school level to make mission driven decisions about people, time, money and program; and calls for leaders adept at securing additional resources and leveraging partnerships to meet physical, social and psychological needs of the students related to their learning (Calkins et al., 2007).

Additionally, states and districts need to create the following structural changes for schools in order to create the changed climate needed to support successful school turnaround:

- *Clearly defined authority to act* based on what's best for children and learning—i.e., flexibility and control over staffing, scheduling, budget, and curriculum
- *Relentless focus on hiring and staff development* as part of an overall "people strategy" to ensure the best possible teaching force
- *Highly capable, distributed school leadership*—i.e., not simply the principal, but an effective leadership team

- *Additional time* in the school day and across the school year
- *Performance-based behavioral expectations* for all stakeholders including teachers, students, and (often) parents
- *Integrated, research-based programs and related social services* that are specifically designed, personalized, and adjusted to address students' academic and related psycho-social needs (Calkins et al., 2007, p. 5).

This is described as creating a whole specialized team, like a medical team, ready to focus on changing chronic failure. “The quality of the moment depends on the readiness of the system and the people who are part of it to work as a team” (Calkins et al., 2007, p. 9). Support for turnaround cannot be at the school level only, and requires associated changes at the district and state levels in their operation and support to match those school-level efforts and vice versa.

Some reformers would caution that *turnaround* is a term borrowed from business for education reform. Turning around failing schools requires an integrated approach (Ravitch, 2010; Calkins et al., 2007). Turnaround leadership (Fullan, 2006) involves restructuring a failing organization and leading for quick successes with key outcomes. Especially under No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top legislation, many suggest that despite the importance of effective school theory and practice, more is needed to transform chronically failing schools in poor communities to high performing, successful schools with sustained high academic performance.

In summary, there seem to be two broad perspectives of effective school reformers. Those who believe that if schools are effective, academic achievement is possible regardless of the broader circumstances. And, those other reformers who believe

that environmental factors which are related to poverty and which affect learning, must be addressed (especially in schools with the most economically distressed children and families) in order for effective schools to enable broad scale reform and close the achievement gap.

Specifically, poverty is not believed to be an insurmountable determinant by those in the first group, who acknowledge the challenge but take a “no excuses” stance. They believe that if the schools are effective it will result in high academic achievement, regardless of other outside environmental influences. Good teachers doing their job well should result in students who achieve as measured on standardized tests. Teachers should be evaluated by how well their children perform on these tests, no matter what school/community they teach in. This group believes education is a pathway out of poverty to a better life, and that access to a high quality education, as judged by academic outcomes, is the right of every parent for their child.

Their opponents agree that quality teachers and other components of effective schools are very important to all children, especially the most vulnerable. They argue, however, that poverty and the effects of poverty must be addressed as a part of the effort in order to change the outcomes of academic achievement for all children. These researchers show that the more children’s families have some economic stability, the better are the outcomes in education (as well as health and life outcomes). Children whose parents have employment (especially with a livable wage) do better on many measures—including academic achievement—than children in families without this security (Anyon, 1997, 2005; Rothstein, 2004; Berliner, 2006).

If we properly identify the actual social class characteristics that produce differences in average achievement, we should be able to design policies that narrow the achievement gap. Certainly, improvement of instructional practices is among these, but a focus on school reform alone is bound to be frustrating and ultimately unsuccessful. To work, school improvement must combine with policies that narrow the social and economic differences between children. Where these differences cannot easily be narrowed, school should be redefined to cover more of the early childhood, after-school, and summer times, when the disparate influences of families and communities are now most powerful (Rothstein, 2004b). This second perspective will be discussed in more detail under the ecology of human development theory, below.

Teacher Leadership: A Framework and Research Literature

“The radical transformation toward teacher leadership is not an option; it is a necessity” (Reeves, 2008, p. 17).

BRICK was an organization that sought to support teacher professionalism, continual growth, and to support learning in teams or “learning communities.” Thus, teacher leadership theory provides an essential background for understanding this model.

Teacher-run schools, usually run by groups of teachers known as teacher professional partnerships, vary widely in structure and curriculum. What they have in common is that they upend the traditional school hierarchy and put teachers—rather than administrators—in control of decision-making. The teacher-run school model underscores a trend toward more site-based, shared professional decision-making and autonomy in public schools. Some of these schools exist within districts and most are charter schools. Los Angeles, Detroit and Boston are experimenting with pilot “teacher-

run” models. These suggest that creating professional learning communities and empowering teachers to help guide school-wide instruction can help students to achieve new levels of academic success in positive and innovative learning environments ((Zha et al., 2012).

Teacher Leadership, another body of literature in current education research, also informs this study as a theory of change. The research is based on the theory that schools that engage and involve teachers in leadership and decision-making at the school will be more successful and effective in outcomes (Reeves, 2008; Fullan, 2006). One problem with this body of literature is that the term “teacher leadership” has different definitions across the body of literature and research (York-Barr & Dukes, 2004). York-Barr and Duke (2004) completed a comprehensive literature review of teacher-leadership (AERA, 2004). “Teacher leadership is the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement” (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 2). Teacher leaders are seldom effective in their roles without the support and encouragement of their administrator. The principal’s style and characteristics influence change, school improvement, and student success (DeMoss, 2002; Glickman, 2002; Supovitz, 2000; Willmore & Thomas, 2001). High-performing schools that get the best results from the classroom are led by principals who blend strong instructional leadership with a collaborative style that involves teachers in school decisions (Sherman, 2000).

Teacher leaders play both formal and informal teacher leader roles within schools (Patterson & Patterson, 2004). Formal teacher leaders are those given familiar titles such

as department chair, curriculum coordinator, data coach, instructional specialist, and compensated either by additional salary or in exchange for a lighter teaching load. Informal teacher leaders are “recognized by their peers and administrators as those staff members who are always volunteering to head new projects, mentoring and supporting other teachers, accepting responsibility for their own professional growth, introducing new ideas, and promoting the mission of the school” (Wasley, 1991, p. 112; Harrison & Birky, 2011). Informal teacher leaders’ focus is more on the learning and improvement of school and student performance than on leading. Examples of these informal leadership roles include facilitator, advisor/mentor, peer observer, member of a *Professional Learning Community* (PLC), resource provider (Patterson, 2004).

The work of teacher leaders is greatly varied, but is usually specific to the context of the school (Boyd–Dimock & McGree, 1995). The most common roles played by teacher leaders in studies (York–Barr & Duke, 2004) were collaboration with peers, and communication with all members of their school community (Birky & Ward, 2003). The typical roles that teacher leaders perform are to plan, organize, and create; assist in the overall improvement of a school’s community and performance; collaborate with peers, parents, and school communities; and to continuously reflect on their work (Harrison & Birky, 2011). Teacher leaders are passionate, driven, and have expertise in instruction and engage in continuous inquiry, inform, persuade (Darensbourg, 2011; Harrison & Birky, 2011). Various skills and roles of teacher leaders in schools have included:

- building trust and developing rapport
- diagnosing organizational conditions
- being non–judgmental

- modeling collegiality
- encouraging other teachers
- continually learning
- taking initiative
- persevering in the face of obstacles
- building a team spirit
- facilitating communication and reflection among the faculty
- exercising patience
- enhancing teachers' self esteem
- promoting a clear vision
- dealing with processes
- analyzing and making adjustments/improvements (Lieberman et al., 1988; Harrison & Birky, 2011)

In their recent study that compared the perspectives of principals and teachers related to teacher leadership, Harrison & Birky (2011) found four emergent themes:

- Collaboration
- Teaching and Learning
- Managing the Work
- Interpersonal Relationships

While principals tended to talk more about teachers' roles in changing the school (mission and vision), teachers tended to talk about their role in the classroom context with students. Neither mentioned "collaboration," a term so frequently used in the

literature (Harrison &, 2010). The soft skill characteristics were brought up more by teachers than by principals and were all about relationships, which were missing in the teacher–leader literature, although present in general educational school leadership literature (Harrison & Birky, 2011). Interpersonal relationships of teacher leaders included such skills and characteristics as care, communication, ability to connect and build relationships with all types of individuals, integrity, and advocacy for student needs. Principals tended to talk more about mission and vision and whole school improvement (Harrison & Birky, 2011).

Ecology of Human Development Theory

The founders of BRICK were strong believers in the opportunity to help every student achieve and acquire the essential skills of literacy to become a self-initiated learner. They also, however, believe in the importance and influence of the family and community environment upon their efforts and upon student learning and well being. They believed in the importance of supporting positive changes in those environments which are inter-connected with learning and school outcomes. Bronfenbrenner's *ecology of human development theory* has also been used as a theoretical framework in recent years for full service community schools, a model which seeks to connect community services and resources with families on site and through schools.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) studied human development. He proposed a theory of human ecology: the idea that human development happens within a set of nested environments and that the study of what happens to influence human development cannot be isolated to any single one of those nested environments. Human development is a process connected to the interaction of those various environments (e.g., family,

neighborhood, school, etc); thus human development must be studied in relation to those various environments and the complex interactions between them (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Theory of Human Development (BTHD) (1979) offers a comprehensive map of the various settings that influence a developing child and the social interactions, structural characteristics, and interconnections between those settings. Social interactions within those settings that influence development are termed proximal *processes*. Such proximal processes can be a risk to, or protective of, positive outcomes. For example, neighborhoods with high levels of social capital might act as a protective factor promoting positive outcomes, whereas, by contrast, risk factors such as poor physical conditions and low economic resources in a neighborhood threaten school outcomes (Woolley et al., 2008, p. 132; also Richman et al., 2004; Woolley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006).

Bronfenbrenner's human ecology model offers a framework for studying the ways in which various separate and interconnected environments affect human development physically, psychologically, cognitively and socially. His model suggests that one environment cannot be isolated or disconnected from other environments which all influence the developmental outcomes for children, including the school environments. Furthermore, environments effect the perceptions, values, beliefs and behaviors in human development.

Bronfenbrenner's theory of bio-ecological development has been used as a theoretical framework for a broad array of interdisciplinary studies in health, social capital and neighborhood effects on development and on educational outcomes. It can be

used as a theoretical umbrella for some of the more holistic and radical educational reformers who argue that what happens in systems outside of the schools cannot be considered separate and unrelated to student academic achievement outcomes and what happens inside schools. Some educational leaders, reformers and politicians are focused only on what happens inside schools as the major cause for test outcomes and the measure of efficiency and accountability. Other educational researchers propose that education cannot be placed in a silo, unaffected by the influences of the other environments that positively and/or negatively affect cognitive development and therefore academic achievement. The effects of family and community economics, as well as physical and social environment, influence education and are strong influences upon a student's development and performance. Bronfenbrenner also suggests that the perception of control of one's environment can be a strong influence in developmental outcomes.

There is a substantial body of evidence that place and neighborhood matter as a determinant of individual and population health, as suggested by human ecology theory (as well as other theoretical models which have been developed in the fields of sociology, epidemiology, health, medicine, and population health). The socio-economic characteristics of a neighborhood such as poverty rate, crime rates, and racial/ethnic residential segregation can be correlated to health as environmental factors (Diez Roux, 2003; Williams et al., 2008; Williams & Collins, 2001). Vulnerability to environmental and psychosocial stressors compounds immediate and longitudinal effects on health status (Gee & Sturges-Payne, 2004; Williams et al., 2008). Part of this growing and compelling body of evidence tells us that health disparities are linked to the racial

residential segregation of poor and minority populations in urban centers in the United States today.

Place—i.e., the neighborhood you live in—can affect health outcomes for children into adulthood. The level of education (along with income, gender, age, occupation and race/ethnicity) is one of the most common predictors of adult socioeconomic status and associated positive or negative health trajectories (Alwin & Wray, 2005; Adler et al., 1993; Adler et al., 1994). For that population which completes a higher level of schooling, their level of control is increased and this relates to greater health outcomes for that group versus those not completing as high a level of education. Occupation and income are strongly correlated to education levels, all of which influence health outcomes (and vice versa).

Additional studies show that children's health is nested in and cumulative with family and community (Larson et al., 2008). Many of these studies recommend that “programs and policies that address multiple domains of social risk (individual/family/community) offer the best hope for achieving improvements in child health” (Larson, et al., p. 342). Exposure during childhood to unhealthy neighborhoods is part of the trajectory to negative life course outcomes, differing from outcomes of children in opportunity neighborhoods who have access to resources and services (Acevedo–Garcia et al., 2008). Children whose parents live in hyper–segregated poor communities with no interaction with their higher performing and higher social economic status (SES) peers have more negative outcomes, not only in educational outcomes but also health, life expectancy, housing, and employment in future years (Wilson, 1996,

2009; Massey & Denton, 1993; Rothstein, 2004a, 2004b; Rothstein & Wilder, 2007; Anyon, 1997, 2005; Berliner, 2006).

Education outcomes and health outcomes are closely intertwined (Dryfoos, 1998; Lara et al., 2005; Acevedo–Garcia et al., 2008; Baker, 2012). Health problems attributed to effects of poverty such as asthma are closely related to school absenteeism, which is often used as a measure for effective schools (Bryk et al., 2010). Chronic school absenteeism has been linked to negative academic achievement and outcomes (Chang and Romero, 2008). One major cause of absenteeism is asthma, an environmentally linked disease (Akinbami et al., 2011).

The growing body of research in diverse fields of health, segregation and housing, poverty, employment, violence, neighborhood efficacy, and other physical and sociological factors demonstrate the complex inter-relationship between systems that influence educational outcomes for children. This research has encouraged the broad research-based comprehensive school reform models and coalitions such as Comer School Development model (Comer, 1998); Full Service Community Schools (Dryfoos, 1998; Dryfoos et al., 2005; Quinn, 2009); and the Broader, Bolder Approach to educational reform (Ladd, 2012; Noguera & Wells, 2011; Sadovnik, 2013).

All of these school reform models are further strengthened when placed in the theoretical context of Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development model. The Comer model suggests that schools must address the developmental needs of the whole child. The Full-Service Community Schools model suggests that schools can better serve children and families with education as a change agent if they build bridges and connectors with community resources to help meet child development and family needs.

Broader, Bolder Approach, another similar education reform and systems theory of change model, suggests that to change outcomes in the educational context, it is impossible to do so without seeking to change those other contexts that are affecting child development in the environment and the community surrounding the school and the child. This change model is exemplified in initiatives such as Harlem Children's Zones and Promise Neighborhoods.

Many researchers and practitioners alike suggest this similarity of interconnectedness (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Comer, 1996; Community Schools, Berliner, 2006; Anyon, 1997, 2005; Ferguson, 2007; Rothstein, 2004; Ravitch, 2007; Noguera & Wells, 2011). They argue that while development of effective schools and effective school organizations is necessary for strong educational outcomes, these efforts will fall short, especially in high poverty areas, without addressing the broader basic needs of children and families. This requires effecting change in the other interactive environments and contexts within which child development is nested—family and neighborhood environment and systems (including livable wage employment, housing, health, nutrition, etc). Furthermore, all of these environments as well as the various facets of child development (cognitive, psychological, physical, social, emotional) are interactive and inseparable.

Summary of Theoretical Framework

BRICK Avon Academy was a teacher-initiated model created and implemented by six TFA alumni, all Newark Public Schools teachers. Their experiences as teachers in public schools led them to a year of study of best practices and best models to employ in their first school in the fall of 2010. The theories that best serve as a

framework for their evolving model emphasize: 1) effective schools theory built on research and practice (Edmonds, 1979; Bryk et al., 2010; and Calkins et al., 2007), including turnaround theory; 2) teacher leadership theory, which distinguishes and explores leadership from a teacher-led perspective, and teachers' roles in school leadership, and how it effects organizational and achievement outcomes; and 3) ecology of human development theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) that suggests the nested, interconnectedness of human learning and development in context with systems and environment; and concludes that it is not reasonable to expect schools to achieve reforms and transformational outcomes in isolation from social disparities that affect student lives and student learning. Interestingly, effective schools theory and research is often paired with current neo-liberal school reform. Teacher leadership theory and human ecology theory, on the other hand, are not as linked with this political agenda.

Chapter 4

Research Methods

Research Questions

This case study was conducted during the third year of implementation of the BRICK model. It explored how the model and the people implementing it were influenced and/or changed over the three-year period, and how student outcomes were influenced over that same period of startup implementation.

Research Questions that were Addressed

1. How was the BRICK model, with its key goals and strategies, understood and implemented by the stakeholders at BRICK in their efforts to influence student outcomes? The learning community at BRICK Avon was observed and described in its third year of implementation. Questions included:

- How was it being developed in real time?
- How were leadership and governance implemented?
- How were professional support, development and collaboration implemented?
- How were key strategies for pedagogy and instruction implemented, and how are these assessed for continuation, modification or abandonment over time?
- How was the BRICK student-centered learning environment implemented? How were student development and student achievement assessed? What were the goals? What were the outcomes?
- How were key strategies implemented for engagement with parents and community to support student achievement and to build a successful learning community?

- How was the budget for this work designed and implemented? What were the budgetary challenges short-term and long-term for sustaining this model and its desired outcomes for students? Various budget components explored were district support, short-term public and private grants; other support. What were the challenges and opportunities related to funding, budget, and resources?
- How was time structured to support key activities such as teacher collaboration, leadership and governance structure? What worked and why?.
- How were relationships built (teacher to teacher, teacher to student, student to student, teacher and school to parent/home/community)?
- How was school climate assessed?

2. What were the student outcomes during the implementation of the model? How did they change over time?

3. How did neighborhood attributes (e.g., family income and employment, housing, crime, health status) influence, positively or negatively, student learning outcomes and the development and sustainability of a strong learning community at BRICK Avon Academy?

Research Design: Mixed Methods Case Study

The research design used for the present study was a mixed methods case study, using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. A case study allowed exploration and analysis of the implementation of a model for teacher-led turnaround school reform in an urban poor neighborhood K–8 elementary school. The real-life implementation was “messy.”

The philosophical worldview of the researcher in this study was one of pragmatic constructivism; that is, one that seeks understanding, multiple participant meanings, social and historical construction and theory generation (Creswell, 2009, p.6). Both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered from multiple sources.

Yin suggests that “in general, case studies are the preferred method when (a) *how* and *why* questions are being posed, (b) the investigator has little control over [behavior] and events, and (c) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context” (2009, p. 2). The present study of the third year of implementation of the BRICK model at BRICK Avon Academy fits Yin’s description of a contemporary event in which the researcher has little (or no) control over behavior and events. The present case study was bounded in time from the creation and planning of the model which occurred in 2009 up until the real-time third year of its implementation (2012–13). “In brief, the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events—such as ... small group change, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, (and) school performance” (Yin, 2009, p. 4). The present study involved using an historical review through collection and analysis of data, and archival and current documents, as well as a study of real-time, third year of implementation, calling for additional sources of evidence: direct observation of the events being studied and interviews of key stakeholders (Yin, 2009). Triangulation of data from different sources is essential to a successful case study because of the richness and complexity of the real life context of the case study (Yin, 2009, p. 2). In the present study, data from various stakeholder surveys and interviews, observation, archives, and school data were triangulated to support and validate the analyses and findings.

The choice for a case study as a research design and the use of mixed methods is also supported by Creswell's assertion that "a mixed methods design for case study is useful when either the quantitative or qualitative approach by itself is inadequate to best understand a research problem" (Creswell, 2009, p.18). In keeping with a mixed method approach, the researcher used both quantitative and qualitative data and analyses. This was necessary to do because neither method alone was adequate to answer the research questions. Furthermore, there is a rationale for mixing them and integrating the data at different stages of inquiry (Creswell, 2009, p.17). For example, the interviews shed detailed meaning and further light on the survey responses.

Case study inquiry can also benefit "from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis" (Yin, 2009, p. 18). The present case study used the Organizing for Effective Schools theory of practice research (Bryk et al., 2010), summarized earlier in Chapter 3. The Bryk research offers an overarching research-based effective schools framework for exploring the BRICK model and the complex components of effective schools. In these studies, Bryk and his colleagues examined groups of schools. The Chicago researchers utilized massive amounts of data collected together with the schools to analyze what factors and variables could be shown to be the essential ingredients for effective schools. These "drivers" of effective schools were found to be key in transforming a failing school into a healthy and successful school in terms of student outcomes (Bryk et. al, 2010). The components of the BRICK model are very similar to the theory of practice model for effective schools described and validated in effective schools research (Edmonds, 1979) and in the longitudinal research by Bryk and his colleagues (2010). These models and research were discussed in Chapter

3. The present study of BRICK took the components found in Bryk et al.'s research as a beginning point—a validated theoretical framework and backdrop—for considering the BRICK model and its implementation at BRICK Avon Academy.

The present study described and explored the specific BRICK model for school reform and turning around a failing school into a thriving school. The present study employed structured interviews with practitioners to answer questions about how and why BRICK actors implemented certain strategies at particular times to align with goals and desired outcomes. This research included real time observation of the third year of implementation of the BRICK model and input by stakeholders.

Phases of the Present Study

Pre-Study

The present case study utilized the findings of a study completed in the first year of implementation by Zha, Owens, and Knauer (2012). The tools used to gather data in this initial year study included surveys based on the survey designs used by Bryk et al. (2010) in the Chicago Consortium's study with the Chicago Public Schools. The first-year study (Zha et al., 2012) formed the foundation for the present study.

Preparing for the Present Study

The researcher drew from the survey designs of the initial year study (Zha et al., 2012) to prepare the survey tools for the present study, in order to maintain the similarity to both the Chicago Consortium survey design, and the design of the initial year study. The researcher designed the surveys in the present study to be similar to the topics and questions in the surveys from the initial year surveys (Zha et al., 2012), which were themselves aligned with the Chicago School Consortium surveys (Bryk et al., 2010). The

changes made by the researcher to the surveys for the present study served to clarify questions, to reduce the survey length, and to align with the present study's research questions. The researcher kept a focus on "leadership" because of its importance to both the Chicago research (Bryk et al.) and because of the central role of teacher leadership in the BRICK model. The researcher selected questions both in the surveys and in the interviews to explore concordance between the BRICK model on paper and in theory to the expressed understanding of the stakeholders who were engaged in implementing the BRICK model at BRICK Avon Academy (BAA).

The researcher prepared and successfully defended her study proposal and received IRB approval for her study design and tools. The researcher worked with the Newark Schools Collaboration for approval from the Newark Public Schools (State-appointed superintendent and NPS Advisory Board) for the present study, and gained support from the BRICK Avon Academy principal and BRICK director for the present study. Rutgers IRB approval was granted for the present study (Appendix A).

The present study was completed between November of 2012 and May of 2014. The researcher conducted the majority of her research at the school between January—June, 2013 (Year 3 of BRICK implementation at BAA).

Data Collection

Quantitative Methods Data Collection

Quantitative methods were used to organize and analyze existing data gathered at BRICK to access grade level and student achievement over time. Several methods were used to gather data for analysis including student demographic and assessment data, and surveys.

Student Demographic and Assessment Data

Background

The State of New Jersey collects a range of information about public school students from each district/school. Demographic and test results are presented annually by the New Jersey State Department of Education for public internet access in a report called the “School Report Card.” The NJ ASK served as the annual performance test to measure student achievement at each school and for comparison between schools across the state during the period for the present study. (New Jersey’s statewide achievement test changed from NJ ASK to the PARC after AY 2013–14.) Student performance is measured and reported in the areas of language arts and math for students in Grades 3–8, and science (Grades 4 and 8 only).

Additionally, the annual school report card shows student demographic data by school for such items as race, gender, school and grade level enrollment, and income levels reported as percentages of students qualified for “free” or “reduced” lunch. These data are collected by schools as a reporting requirement for their participation and funding in the Federal food program. Data published by the state also included (depending on the year) student mobility rates, student and teacher attendance rates, and, in recent years, student chronic absenteeism rates (students absent more than 18 days per school year). Data were also gathered from local district websites.

Data Sources

Existing Data

Student achievement formal assessments and standardized test scores were collected from the school for analysis by the researcher. These include assessments in

aggregated form such as standardized test scores for the NJ ASK (Grades 3–8).

Additional school student data was collected from both the school and, where available, from the NJ School report card included attendance, student transience, and student demographics. Sources used to assess student achievement outcomes: (Question #2)

Additional student data were collected from the school records (mostly digital) including S.T.E.P. Literacy assessments (administered by teachers) for Grades K–3, for the first 4 years of this present study. School and student data were also gathered from State and local documents and websites. These data were further analyzed to answer the research questions about student outcomes.

Demographic data were collected from public sources such as the U.S. Census, the City of Newark Master Plan, NPS documents on line, etc. and news sources to answer the research questions about families and the neighborhood.

Appendix A describes the various sources of information and data collection as they relate to answering the research questions. Research data were gathered from the following formal student academic assessments over time and included:

- NJ ASK school standardized assessments aggregated by grade level
- S.T.E.P. reading assessments aggregated by grade level and assessment
- chronic absenteeism rates
- PowerSchool mobility rates

Surveys

Three surveys were conducted by the researcher at the school in February, 2013 (during AY 2012–13, BRICK Year 3) for the following three groups at BAA: Teachers, Staff Members, and Parents. The survey responses helped to suggest additional questions

or probing needed for an exploration in individual interviews of representative stakeholders.

Data from a fourth survey on School Climate were obtained when the researcher assisted the school administrators with administering and analyzing their School Climate survey with parents in the fall of 2014.

Teacher Survey

Background

The researcher used a teacher survey to gain direct input from teachers at BRICK Avon with a goal of 100% response. The survey allowed teachers the freedom to respond to questions at a time most convenient to them and with anonymity.

Recruitment

The goal was to receive as many surveys back as possible from all teachers, including grade level teachers (including Special Education), special teachers (visual art, music, physical education, language) and intervention and support teachers. A survey with a cover letter was placed in each teacher's mailbox. Surveys could be returned to the researcher or dropped into a box on the front desk of the main office. The researcher did follow up in person with a number of teachers, asking if they had returned their survey, or if they needed another copy to complete. There was no material incentive for completing the survey. A "thank you" luncheon (sandwiches and fresh fruit) was provided by the researcher at the end of the year/ study for all teachers and staff in the teachers' room.

IRB

A copy of the IRB–approved Teacher Survey is included in Appendix A.

Sample

Twenty–eight (N=28) teacher surveys were completed and returned. This represented 68% of all teachers at BAA. The surveys were anonymous. There were responses from at least one teacher at every grade level (K–8); teachers of every subject (language arts, science, math, humanities), and a number of enrichment teachers (music, art, Mandarin), a special needs teacher, and an intervention teacher and a coach.

Table 4.1

BRICK Avon Teachers Invited to Complete Teacher Survey in February 2013

Teacher Survey	Number of teachers at BAA	Total Responses to Teacher Survey
Classroom Teachers K–8 and Special Education	30	
Special subject Teachers Music (2), Art (2), Physical Education, Language (2), Intervention (4)	11	
Total	41 (100%)	28 (68%)

Survey Content

The survey design used a combination of Likert scale questions and open response questions. The survey included a total of 48 questions: 31 Likert scale, 5 open–

ended, 9 self-report and 1 yes/no. Survey completion was estimated to take approximately 20–30 minutes.

Likert scales were used to survey teachers about such topics as *school as workplace; teacher engagement, leadership and change; teacher collaboration; and teacher professional development; teacher responsibility for student achievement; teacher and parent communication, and partnership for student success*. Two Likert scales were used: one used the response options “strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree”; the other one “none, some, about half, most, and nearly all” responses.

Analysis

The researcher used SPSS to tabulate and analyze the survey responses (IBM SPSS Statistics MAC version 21). There was no additional reliability check for the tabulation of the survey results into SPSS. The open-ended responses were also recorded and tabulated by the researcher into a WORD document.

Staff Survey

Background

A survey of key staff members at BAA was used to gather responses from both professional and support staff members. The survey allowed the researcher to gather input from a broad number of staff members, with questions that varied just a bit from the teacher survey.

Recruitment

The Staff Survey was conducted during the same time period as the Teacher Survey (February, 2013). Not all staff members were invited to participate. Instead, a representative of each unit (custodial, security, front office, teacher's aides) was invited to participate. The surveys were placed in staff members' mailboxes and also distributed to them directly by the researcher. Surveys were expected to take approximately 20–30 minutes to complete. Completed surveys were returned by staff members in the drop box on the counter in the main office. The researcher did give personal follow-up reminders to several staff members, asking if they had completed and returned the survey.

IRB

Rutgers IRB approval was received for the Staff Survey. A copy of the IRB-approved Staff Survey is included in Appendix A.

Sample

Eighteen staff members completed the survey (N=18). Approximately two thirds of the respondents were non-degreed staff members—teachers aides, administrative assistants, custodian, security guard, parent liaison, etc. Six respondents had degrees and three to four respondents may have been professional educators (non-classroom teachers).

Survey Content

Survey questions included 39 Likert scale questions, 1 yes/no question, 7 open-ended questions, and 8 self report profile responses.

Analysis

The researcher tabulated all survey responses for each survey into SPSS statistics analysis software (IBM SPSS Statistics MAC version 21). The open-ended responses were also recorded and tabulated by the researcher into a WORD document.

Parent Survey

Background

The parent survey allowed the researcher to gather direct input from a large number of parents of students at BRICK Avon Academy.

Sample

A survey was administered to an opportunistic sample of approximately 140 parents in attendance at a school open house event. Of the 140 parents in attendance, 84 completed the survey (N=84). Respondents represented over 50% of those in attendance. From the self report profile questions, we can project that each parent had an average of two students at the school (some represented one student and many represented two to four students). If we say that 84 parents represented approximately 168 students at the school, this represents 30% of the entire 563 students enrolled at the school in AY 2012–13.

Recruitment

The parent survey was distributed by the researcher to the approximately 140 parents attending the February school Open House (report card/parent-teacher conferences) from 4–7:30 pm. The security guard assisted the researcher in distributing the survey and requesting that parents participate when they came to sign in (required by the school). The researcher provided clip boards and pencils so that parents could more

easily complete the survey and return it, either on their way in or on their way out. The researcher had a small table inside the front entrance, and asked parents to participate by completing the survey.

IRB

A copy of the IRB–approved Parent Survey is included in Appendix A.

Survey Content

The survey utilized 16 Likert scale statements, 3 yes/no responses, 7 open–ended responses, and 8 self report profile questions.

Analyses

The researcher used SPSS to tabulate and analyze the data. The researcher tabulated all survey responses for each survey into SPSS statistics analysis software (IBM SPSS Statistics MAC version 21) for analysis. There was no additional reliability check for the tabulation of the survey results into SPSS. The open–ended responses were also recorded and tabulated by the researcher into a WORD document.

Parent Climate Survey

Background

The researcher worked with the BRICK Avon administrators to administer and analyze a school climate survey in order to support school leaders to obtain parent feedback and perceptions about the school climate.

Sample

There were 199 surveys returned; however, a number were not fully completed. There were 165 surveys with responses to most questions, so the analytic sample was

N=165. This is estimated to represent parents of approximately 60% of the families of the 630 students enrolled at the school in AY 2013–14.

Recruitment

The school conducted the Climate Survey to an opportunistic group of parents—all parents attending the “back to school” Open House in fall 2013 (September 18, 2013).

IRB

See Appendix A for the IRB approved Parent Survey.

Survey Content

The survey included a double-sided questionnaire with Likert scale questions (agree/disagree) in areas of school safety (9), teaching and learning (7), interpersonal relationships (10), and overall satisfaction (14). There were three demographic questions about how many children in the family are at BRICK Avon Academy and in what grades; and whether or not this is your first year at BRICK Avon. Finally, would you recommend this school to other parents (yes/no), and an invitation to add additional comments or concerns about school climate at BAA.

Analyses

The researcher assisted the school with the survey, and helped to collate and analyze the responses using SPSS. The researcher tabulated all survey responses for each survey with SPSS statistics analysis software (IBM SPSS Statistics MAC version 21). The open-ended responses were also recorded and tabulated by the researcher into a Word document.

Qualitative Method Data Collection

Qualitative methods used to gather data for this present study included:

- field observations at the school and in the neighborhood (approximately 250 hours), including parent workshops, school events, teachers, teacher grade level meetings, faculty development, general school and classroom observation; field notes were kept by the researcher in notebooks by date and time;
- interviews with key stakeholders at BRICK (38 interviews including administrators, teachers, staff, parents and community partners);
- examination of documents, websites and archival materials; and
- photos taken by researcher of school life, student work, special events, neighborhood, etc.

Field Observations

The researcher was embedded at the school for over 300 hours of observation from January through June during the third year of BRICK implementation, during the second half of the 2012–13 school year, and also during the first half of the 2013–14 year. She was invited to sit in as an observer on the weekly executive team meetings. These weekly meetings at 7:00 – 8:00 a.m. included the CEO of BRICK (Lee); the principal (Haygood); and the two vice principals (Perpich and Weidman). The researcher was given access to daily school operations before, during and after school, and on weekends. She had permission to observe many classrooms, and she had access to committee meetings and to parent and community events. Committee meetings included:

- school instructional cabinet meetings (principal with vice principals, coaches, guidance and social worker):
- student support committee (weekly meetings of administrator with student support team: guidance, service social worker, dean of students; child study team social worker, attendance counselor, parent liaison, and nurse:
- grade level and vertical team meetings;
- monthly faculty meetings;
- weekly executive team meetings (administrators); and
- Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) meetings (with parent's permission).

The researcher had access to all faculty and staff (for interviews and surveys); and to parent and community events (trainings and parent meetings; performances (concerts, etc), BRICK store, celebrations—e.g., red carpet event—and graduations. Basically, the BRICK leadership welcomed the researcher and gave her access to the school. The researcher was invited and attended BRICK's 3-day off-site (residency) leadership retreat in August of 2013 with BRICK leadership from both BRICK Avon and BRICK Peshine School as a part of development and planning for the new school year.

The researcher did classroom observations (K, 2nd, 5th, 6th, 7th grades) and observed all school settings (classroom, playground/ gym and recess; cafeteria; art and music; afterschool clubs; parent meetings; teacher and staff meetings). Even with such an "open door" welcome, because she was not privy to the daily communication venues used by the staff (computers and cell phones), the researcher found it difficult in the beginning to feel "in the know" about daily schedules, even with general schedules

shared with her by BRICK leaders. What helped immensely were the weekly calendars prepared by Vice Principal Chris Perpich (see example in Appendix A). The events on these calendars could be confirmed and/or modified; however, they included the best composite of both the school schedule and special events, including staff birthdays, on any given day/week. The calendars were a powerful way to unify the school and help everyone to feel that they knew some of what was happening and were “on the same page.” The researcher would often begin the day at 7:45 a.m. out on the playground with the entire school population and BRICK administrators.

Interviews

Background

The researcher conducted interviews with representative adult members of the BRICK Avon Academy community to delve deeper into exploring the questions and areas of inquiry in the present study, and to use qualitative data to triangulate with survey and other quantitative data, and with field observations.

Sample

The researcher sought to collect a sample number of interviews that would adequately represent the subgroups of adult stakeholders at BRICK Academy: administrators, teachers, staff, and parents. The researcher conducted a total of 38 individual interviews. Interviews were conducted with all but one founder (5 of 6), all administrators (4 of 4), at least one teacher from each grade level (11 of 30 classroom teachers covering nine grade levels), key staff members 10 of 30, and parents. Table 4.2 shows the number of interviews by stakeholder category. Furthermore, the researcher made an effort to include in the interviews a substantial number of teachers across the

grade levels who were former Teach For America (TFA) alumni and who were now teaching at BRICK Avon. There were 5 of 12 teachers interviewed by the researcher who were former TFA alumni.

Table 4.2

Interviews of BAA Stakeholders Conducted by Researcher in Spring 2013 (AY 2012–13)

Category of Stakeholder	Number interviewed	Category included
Administrators	4 (of 4)	Also founders
Teachers (*1 founder)	12* (of 30)	Grade level classroom teachers (included 1 founder)
Staff	12 (of 40)	Guidance, Social Work, Child study team, Dean of Students, Security, Parent liaison, Attendance, Nurse, PlayWorks Coach, Art, Fund developer
Parents	10 (of approximately 200)	Including One parent for each grade level
Total	38	

IRB

See approved IRB open interview questions in Appendix A.

Procedure

Interviews were conducted by the researcher from March through June of 2013 (AY 2012–13). The interviews were scheduled in advance by the researcher with each BAA stakeholder. The interviewer reviewed the IRB–approved consent form with each potential subject and allowed time for the person being interviewed to read the form, ask any questions, and sign the form giving permission for the interview and for the audio recording. All interviews were audio recorded. In a couple of cases the recorder cut off, or failed. The researcher made notes during these sessions, after discovering the failure to record. In most cases, the researcher went to the interviewee to conduct the interview. This meant that interviews for teachers were usually in that teacher’s classroom, often in afterschool hours. The security guard interview was done at the guard’s desk in the hallway, interrupted by “work.” Parent interviews were often conducted in the Parent Room, with the cooperation of the Parent Liaison. Interviews were generally 20–30 minutes in length, although some interviews were under 15 minutes and others were up to 60 minutes long. A couple of interviews had to be conducted over multiple sessions due to time constraints, fire drill, etc. Most of the interviews were conducted in one session.

Data Analyses

The 38 tape recorded interviews were transcribed by the researcher. Any part of the recordings that could not be deciphered were omitted and marked with “...” between transcribed words.

After the interviews were transcribed, the researcher used NVivo (QSR: Version 12.2.0) software to extract quotes and organize them into themes and key words relating to the research questions and by category (administrators, teachers, staff, parents). NVivo

was used in the coding and analysis of the interview data. Data from the interviews, the surveys, and observation were triangulated to build reliability for the findings of this present study.

Summary of the Sources of Information and Data Collection

The researcher used school documents, data, and archival information shared by the school (teachers, administrators, and parents) and retrieved from various meetings, observations, and from the website to chronicle the development of the school as related to the research questions. The researcher is indebted to BRICK administrators for generously sharing school and student data.

1) Surveys were conducted with teachers and with parents for analysis to answer the research questions about understanding the BRICK model and its implementation.

2) Direct observation, recorded with journal notes and photographs, provided direct, first hand information and data for analysis to answer research questions about the BRICK model and implementation. Meeting observations included a variety of school life, including:

- staff meetings
- grade level and departmental meetings
- planning meetings
- administrative meetings
- meetings with community partners
- parent meetings
- intervention meetings
- staff and parent development workshops

- student development committee meetings
- intervention and referral service meetings (with parental permission)
- leadership planning retreat (3–day) in august of 2013

3) Interviews were conducted and recorded with administrators, teachers, staff, parents and community partners. Interviews were used to answer the research questions, and also to more deeply study information and questions raised in surveys and in observations. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher, then coded and analyzed for qualitative data. The researcher used the software NVIVO for assistance with coding and analyzing the interview transcriptions.

Tables in Appendix A describe the methods and data sources that were used to guide the research in order to answer the research questions and sub–questions. Table A1 describes the methods and data sources that were used to address the research questions and sub–questions. Table A2 school and student data describes the school data that was collected and analyzed. Table A3 shows how the FINDINGS/data were organized to answer key questions with consistency for the case study.

Brief background About the researcher

The researcher is a white woman who has worked as a non–profit leader in partnership with schools and families in Newark for over 30 years. She has engaged in developing and implementing many youth and family development initiatives that address expressed academic and social/emotional needs of youth through community based and school partnerships. She has been an active member and resident of the Newark community for that same period of over three decades. She is passionate about the Newark community and about educational equity and justice. Additionally, she was

part of a three-person team—Dr. Peijia Zha, Leah Owens, and Dorothy Knauer—that conducted research at BRICK Avon Academy during 2011–2012, the first year of its implementation. The present study built upon that initial research. The researcher was familiar to some stakeholders at BRICK, but worked as an outside observer and researcher in a collaborative approach to draw out the perceptions and experiences and knowledge through practice from the various BRICK stakeholders and participants. The researcher could have been viewed with suspicion by some, especially teachers, in a high-stakes, high-stress reform environment. With support from the leaders of BRICK, the researcher built relationships with stakeholders at BRICK Avon Academy. The researcher asked the stakeholders how they hope the BRICK story will be told in order to honor the perspectives of the front line BRICK practitioners.

Ethical Precautions and Considerations Anticipated in the Research Plan

The researcher gained access to the site with the express permission of the head of school (letter attached) and the Newark Public Schools district by email correspondence (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Creswell, 2009, p. 178). The researcher reached out to Dominique Lee, executive director of BRICK, who welcomed the researcher once the district gave permission. Committee member Dr. Jeff Backstrand assisted the researcher with district permission, under the auspices of the Newark School Research Collaborative (NSRC) directed by the researcher's dissertation chair, Dr. Alan Sadovnik.

- 1) The researcher respected all participants and sites and took extra precaution not to interrupt or interfere with implementation in her observations at the school (Berg, 2001; Creswell, 2009).

- 2) The researcher obtained informed consent from all participants in the study (Rutgers IRB; AERA Code of Ethics; Berg, 2009; Creswell, 2009).
- 3) The researcher took all measures possible to insure the confidentiality and the safety of all participants of this case study. Individual identities will be protected by pseudonyms, unless expressly given permission, for example, in the case of the founders.
- 4) The researcher considered reciprocity to the school members and community, recognizing the collaborative process, and express and respect and appreciation for the time and contributions of participants to this study (Punch, 2005; Creswell, 2009; Berg, 2009). For example, the researcher assisted the administrators with composing and analyzing a school culture survey for parents. The researcher recruited volunteers to assist the guidance counselor with a crafts activity for students in Grades 6–8. The researcher provided a simple “thank you” luncheon for faculty and staff in the faculty lounge at the conclusion of the study.
- 5) School reform and all the stakeholders engaged in it is an especially political and emotional topic on a local and personal level, so the researcher used extra precaution to be sensitive and respectful of each participant’s comfort and willingness to participate and respond in interviews and other research methods.
- 6) The researcher respected all vulnerable populations (Rutgers IRB; AERA Code of Ethics; Creswell, 2009).

- 7) Participant interviews and surveys were kept confidential and protected.
They were maintained in a secure, off-site location with access only by the author. Files were protected by passwords and locked cabinets. Participant files will be destroyed 24 months after the study is completed (Rutgers, IRB; Creswell, 2009).
- 8) The researcher has been thoughtful of the safety of all of the study participants in the study design. She has followed IRB protocol to insure the protection of human subjects and received approval from the IRB board of Rutgers, The State University (Approval February 15, 2013; renewal December 23, 2013).
- 9) The researcher was sensitive to using unbiased language when describing participants in the study (this is her home community and she is very conscious and sensitive about this point) (Denzin, 2010; Creswell, 2009).
- 10) The researcher did not suppress, invent, or falsify findings and anticipated to the best of her ability the repercussions of the study on audiences. To this end she sought both checkers and peer reviewers before the research was submitted for permanent record to further insure that these considerations have been fully made. The passage of time since the study also acts as a protective buffer. She reported the details of the research fully and honestly (Berg, 2009; Creswell, 2009, 2013; Yin, 2009; Denzin, 2010).
- 11) The researcher provided authorship and credit to those who substantially contribute to this study (AERA Code of Ethics; Creswell, 2009).

Chapter 5 The Community Setting

The Context: Newark's South Ward

BRICK Avon Academy is located in Newark, New Jersey in the South Ward. Newark was (and still is) the largest city in the state, with a population of approximately 277,332 in 2010 (U.S. Census). It also is challenged with hyper-segregation and high poverty rates, especially when compared with the affluence of Essex County (where it is located) and neighboring Bergen County—both two of the wealthier counties in the country. Fifty-three percent of children ages 0–5 years old in Newark were low poverty (100% of FPL) to extreme poverty (below 50% of Federal Poverty Level). When those children in Newark who were low income (below 200% of FPL) are added to the total, the numbers jump up to 76% in this age group who are poor in Newark. For a family of four in 2011, 50% of the federal poverty level was \$11,175 (100% was \$22,350). This also means that 8.5% of New Jersey's poorest children lived in Newark (2012–13 Newark Kid's Count—ACNJ)

(https://acnj.org/downloads/2013_02_01_NewarkReport.pdf).

In the South Ward of Newark, there were 46,171 residents in 2014, compared to 47,057 in 2000. The population in the South Ward decreased 1.91% over the 2000–2010 decade, compared with a population decrease of 0.51% in Newark over the same period. There were 12,737 children under the age of 18 in the South Ward, which represents 28% of the total population. About 13.5% (1,713) were under age three; an additional 14.3% (1,816) were three or four years old. Of all South Ward residents, 91% were African Americans (Sanzone et al., 2016, p.15 based on 2014 ACS by census tracts).

In 2014, an estimated 22,230 people comprising 7,499 households lived in the 07108 zip code, the area surrounding BRICK Avon Ave School (U.S. Census), down from 24,386 in 2010. This area comprises 48% of Newark's South Ward. Of 22,230 residents, those reporting as African American were 19,839 (89%). Of the 7,499 households in this area, 4,896 were family households, with 2,976 households having one or more child under the age of 18 years old. There were 33% (1,624) female headed households, and 12% (564) grandparents responsible for their own grandchildren. There were 7,290 children ages 3 years and older enrolled in school: 753 in preschool, 428 in kindergarten, 2,698 in elementary school, and 1,526 in high school. Of 12,633 population over the age of 25:

- 867 had less than a 9th grade education,
- 2,081 had some high school with no diploma,
- 4,657 had a high school diploma, and
- 2,942 had some college with no degree
- 643 (5.1%) had an Associate's degree,
- 1,115 (8.8%) had a Bachelor's degree, and
- 328 (2.6%) had a graduate or professional degree

There were 83.6% (16,962) who spoke English-only in the home. Those speaking a language other than English comprised 16.4%, and of this group 8.6% speak Spanish in the home. Just under 4% of Spanish speaking families report speaking English "less than very well"

(<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/map/newarkcitynewjersey/PST045219>)

(<https://factfinder.census.gov>). The general population in Newark's South Ward was a younger population compared to the State of NJ's population. Children under the age of 14 years old made up 18.9% of the total NJ State population, whereas they made up 22.9% of the total population of the South Ward. Of 12,737 children under 18 years old living in the South Ward, 4,186 were under the age of 5.

The South Ward was characterized by high unemployment, low wages, high rates of participation in assistance programs, and high poverty—especially among children (ACS). Incomes of South Ward households were less than one-half of the statewide household income on average. For the 2012 FY income tax (filed in 2013), residents in the 07108 zip code reported an average annual salary of \$26,414 vs. state average incomes of \$68,122. Thirty-seven percent earned less than \$20,000; 18.5% earned less than \$10,000. In the South Ward, 69.3% of households reported incomes below \$25,000; and 90.7% reported below \$50,000. Thirty-two percent of all South Ward residents fell below the poverty line. In 2014, the NJ average unemployment rate for individuals in the labor market with no employment was 9.7% vs. 17.5% in Newark and 26.7% for South Ward residents. South Ward residents lived below the poverty line more frequently than residents of both Newark and New Jersey. An estimated one-third of residents in the South Ward (32.4 percent) lived below the poverty line according to 2014 estimates, compared to 29.4 percent in other areas of Newark and 10.7% statewide. In the South Ward, children experienced the highest rates of poverty among all age groups. Poverty rates tended to decrease with age, but for children under five those in poverty ranged from 45 to 65 percent. This meant that a higher percentage of children in the South Ward lived in families in extreme poverty than other children in Newark and in New Jersey.

Children in families living in extreme poverty were more likely to experience related disparities in health and housing. The total number of housing units the South Ward was estimated at 20,828 housing units. Of these, under 21% were single-family homes (attached or detached). Nearly 80% (6,412) of South Ward households in this area were renters vs. 37% on a statewide average. According to 2014 ACS data, 80% of all South Ward residents carried some type of health insurance. Those covered by health insurance included 93% of children under age 18 and 98 % of adults over 65. However, residents aged 18–64 in the South Ward reported 10% less health care coverage than the general population in NJ in the same age category (72% vs 82%). This is reflective of the availability of health insurance through employment for NJ residents (69%) in this 35–65 year old “head of household” age group vs. 44% of employer-related health insurance in the South Ward for this same age group. Additionally, the types of insurance held by South Ward residents as a whole differed significantly from the types of insurance held by residents of the state. Medicaid coverage was much higher for South Ward residents of all ages as compared to residents statewide. For children under 18 years old, Medicaid rates were 62% for children in the South Ward vs. 26% for the state. Access to health care was a problem even for some people with health coverage. A study in 2012 found that in 2011, only 40% of NJ doctors accepted new Medicaid patients. This was in part due to New Jersey’s lowest rate of Medicaid reimbursement nationwide (Decker, 2012). New Jersey Medicaid rates are one-third the federal rate, making access to medical care very difficult for Medicaid recipients. In addition to the low reimbursement rates, access to healthcare is exacerbated when the density of coverage is very high, as it was in the South Ward. This means that fewer doctors accepted individuals with Medicaid health

coverage in an area with a high number of people with this coverage needing medical care. Additionally, those qualifying for Medicare were those in extreme poverty who experienced more difficulty accessing health care, and they also experienced a higher need for health care because of poverty related disparities such as nutritious food scarcity; substandard housing; and higher stress-related illnesses.

Asthma had long been a significant healthcare problem faced by Newark's families and South Ward residents. Sixteen percent of Newark's population suffered from asthma, versus a national rate of 8 percent (Beth Israel Medical Center, 2013). Advocates for Children of NJ cited a 25% rate of asthma among Newark children in their 2016 Newark Kid's Count. Asthma affected family health, education and educational outcomes, and quality of life. Another health and life safety issue was the accessibility (or lack of accessibility) to affordable and healthy food (fruits and veggies). A community health assessment by Newark Beth Israel Medical Center (2013) revealed a paucity of available and affordable fresh healthy food in the South Ward.

The South Ward was also plagued by violence and crime. Thirty percent of all Newark murders in 2015 occurred in the South Ward, even though the population of the South Ward is only 16.6% of Newark's total population. Of 99 murders in Newark in 2015, 30 occurred in the South Ward (Sanzone et al., 2016, p. 79). Furthermore, the South Ward contained about 30% of all vacant and abandoned property in Newark (Sanzone et al., p. 85; and Newark Open Data Portal, 4/20/16).

Compared to Newark's general population, residents in the South Ward had a tendency to be more mobile across all age groups, with children experiencing the highest mobility rates (26%) (Sanzone et al., SWCA Needs Analysis, p. 89). This means that

South Ward families moved from residence to residence more frequently than other families in other areas of the city and region, probably due to inability to pay rent over time. Note that these family mobility rates were similar to those experienced at the school. Finally, “about 80 % of South Ward residents polled in 2016 reported having access to technology and the internet either through a smart phone or tablet and/or through a place in the neighborhood like the public library where they could go to use the internet” (South Ward Children’s Alliance Promise Neighborhood: Needs and Segmentation Analysis, 2016, p.101). Whereas internet access was once a barrier for many poor communities in the United States even a decade ago, a majority of residents in 2015 seemed to have better access due to the advancement and availability of mobile devices to the general population.

BRICK Avon Academy/Upper Clinton Hill Neighborhood Demographics

The information in this section was drawn from a needs analysis which included the Upper Clinton Hill neighborhood at Rutgers University–Newark (Sadovnik et al., 2017–18). The analysis was conducted in 2017–18 by Rutgers University–Newark Cornwall Center and the School of Public Affairs and Administration’s (SPAA) Center for Collaboration and the Urban Child (CCUC).

BRICK Avon Academy is in the Upper Clinton Hill neighborhood and is located on the edge of census tracts 38 and 37, and near census tracts 39, 41 and 42 and 54 (see Figure 5.1).

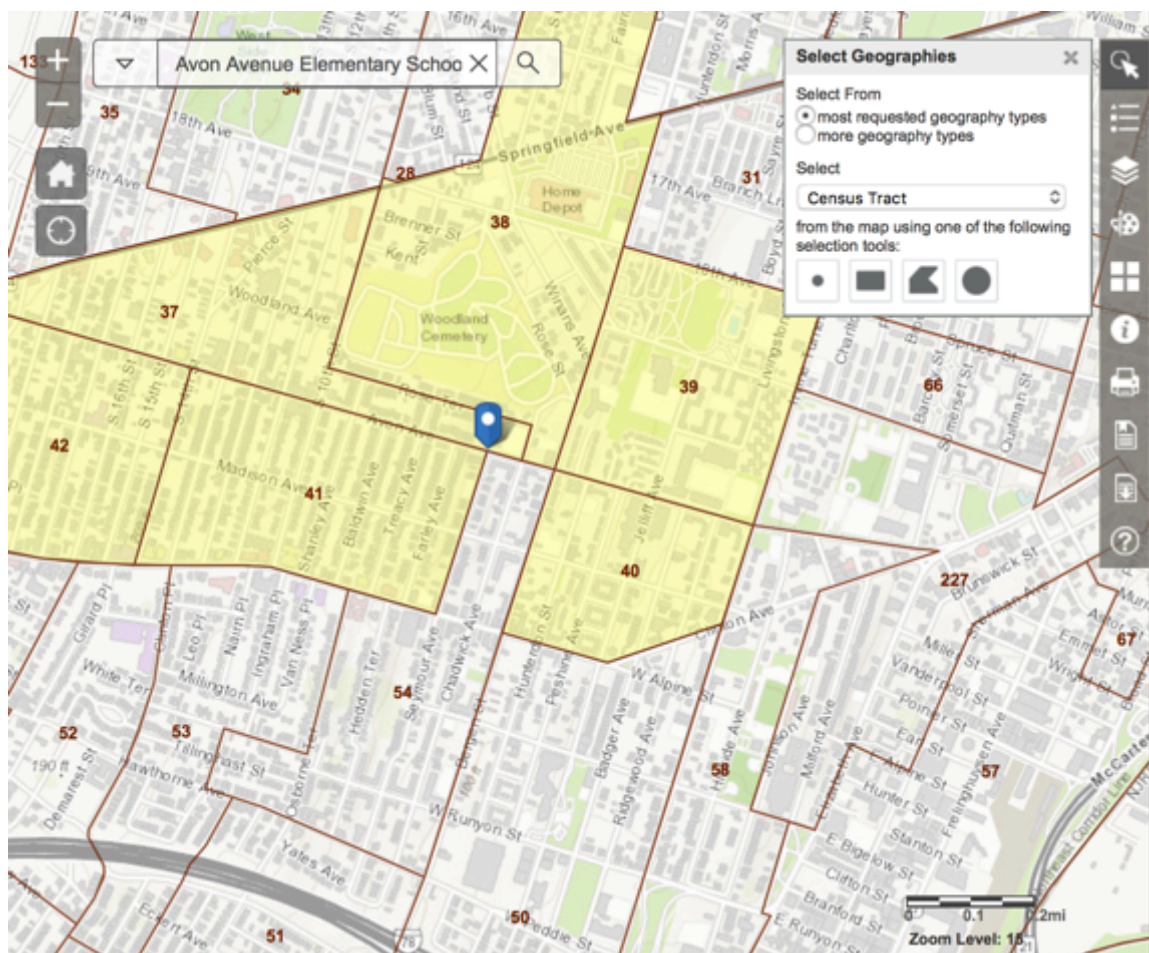
The Upper Clinton Hill Neighborhood

Upper Clinton Hill is bordered by Badger Avenue on the North, South 20th Street on the South, Avon Avenue on the West, and Hawthorne Avenue on the East. The Upper

Clinton Hill neighborhood is comprised of census tracts 41–43 and 52–54. Using the 2016 5–year estimates, the residential population is estimated at 14,626, with 91% being African American. Figure 5.3 reflects the racial and ethnic profile of the neighborhood. The median household income for Upper Clinton Hill is \$29,144, which is also lower than that of Newark City. The percentage of children under 18 years old living below the poverty line variation which ranges from 28% of children living in poverty in census tract 52 to 67% in census tract 41—the tract in the BAA neighborhood (2016 ACS 5–year estimates from <https://factfinder.census.gov/>). Figure 5.1 is a map showing census tracts and showing BRICK Avon Academy on the border of a number of these tracts. Upper Clinton Hill consists of six public schools including two high schools and two charter schools. The neighborhood has one dental care facility, one community–based organization, and more than 25 faith–based organizations as shown on the map in Figure 5.2 (LISC, Greater Newark–Upper Clinton Hill Map from FH_UC Needs Analysis Draft, 11 30 18, p. 11).

Figure 5.1

Map Showing Census Tracts in the Upper Clinton Hill Neighborhood (#41–43 and 52–54) and Also Showing Avon Avenue School (blue marker)



Note. Source: American Fact Finder 2017

Figure 5.2

Map of Upper Clinton Hill Neighborhood: BAA = tan circle #9



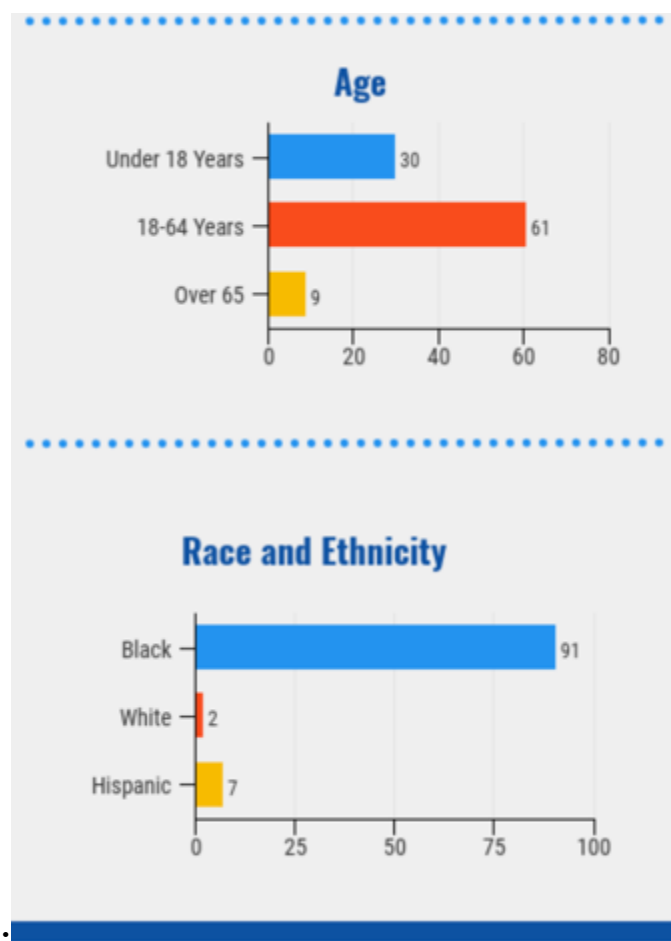
Note: Source: LISC, Greater Newark–Upper Clinton Hill Map

Profile of Upper Clinton Hill Neighborhood

Figure 5.3 shows that the majority (91%) of the population in the Upper Clinton Hill neighborhood is under the age of 64 years old, with 30% under the age of 18 years old. 91% of residents in this same neighborhood identify as black, vs. only 7% Hispanic and 2% white—again very similar to racial profile of students at Avon Avenue School in 2016.

Figure 5.3

Graph of Profile of Upper Clinton Hill Residents by Age and Race



Note. Source: Sadovnik et al., 2017–18

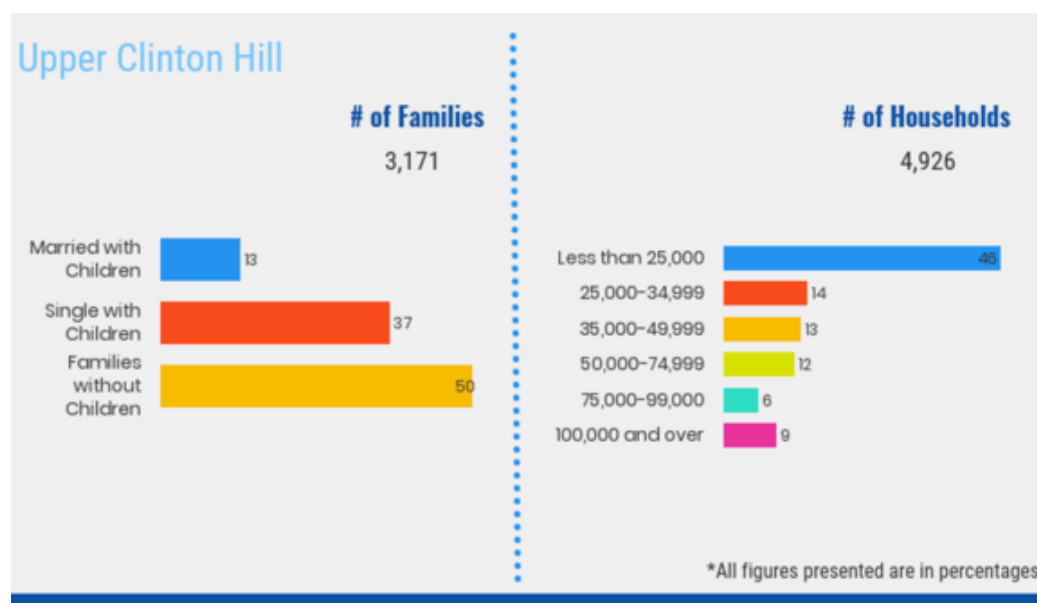
Sociological, Housing, and Economic Profile

Children in Poverty

In Upper Clinton Hill, the percentage of children below 18 years living below the poverty line ranges from 39% (tract 41) to 67% (tract 42). The overall percentage of children below 18 years old living below the poverty line in the community is 55%. For Upper Clinton Hill, 49.8% of families have related children under 18 years old and 33.7% of these families live below the poverty line. In Upper Clinton Hill, 68% of the 4694 children in the community live in single-mother households and 25% with married couples. Figure 5.5 shows income and housing data reflecting that nearly 50% of the population in this area of the South Ward have an annual household income of less than \$25,000.

Figure 5.4

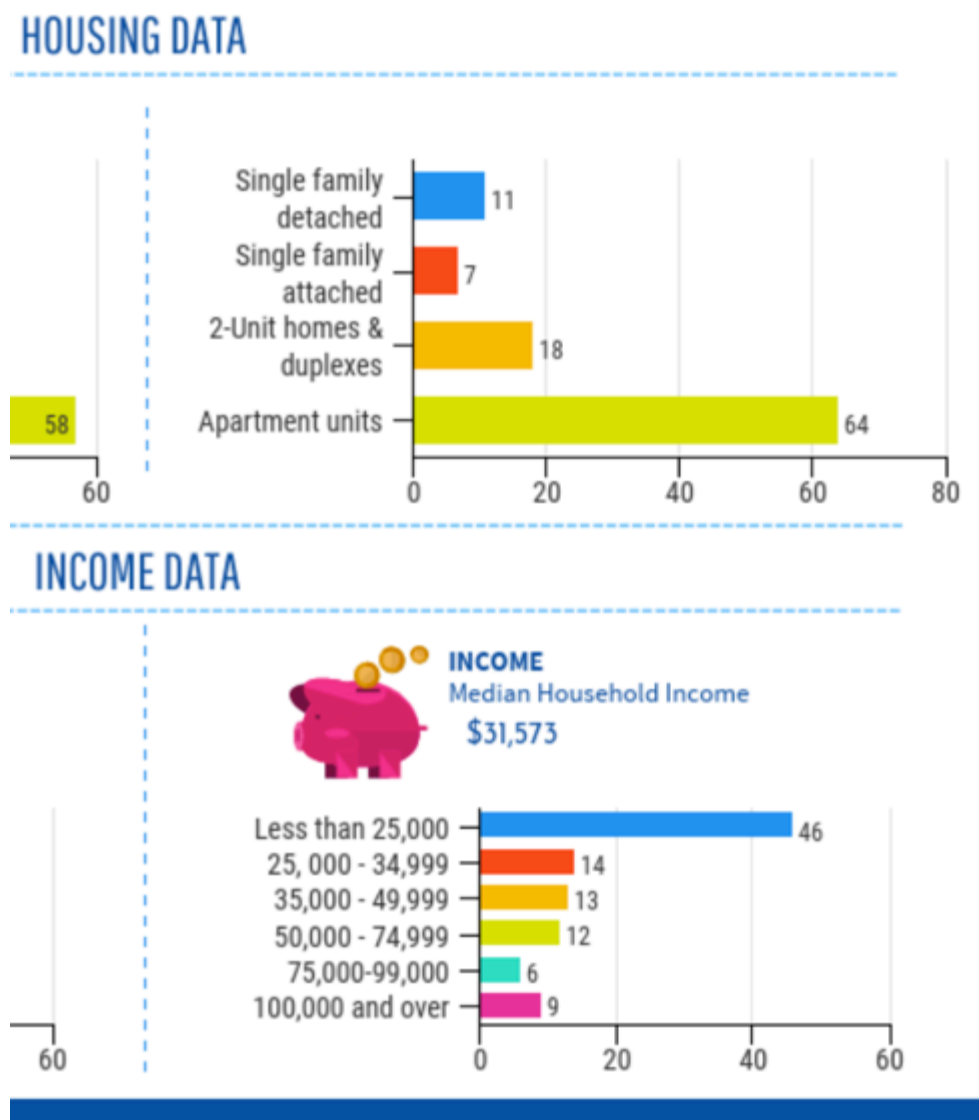
Number of Families and Households in Upper Clinton Hill neighborhood



Note. Source: Sadovnik et al., 2017–18, p. 4

Figure 5.5

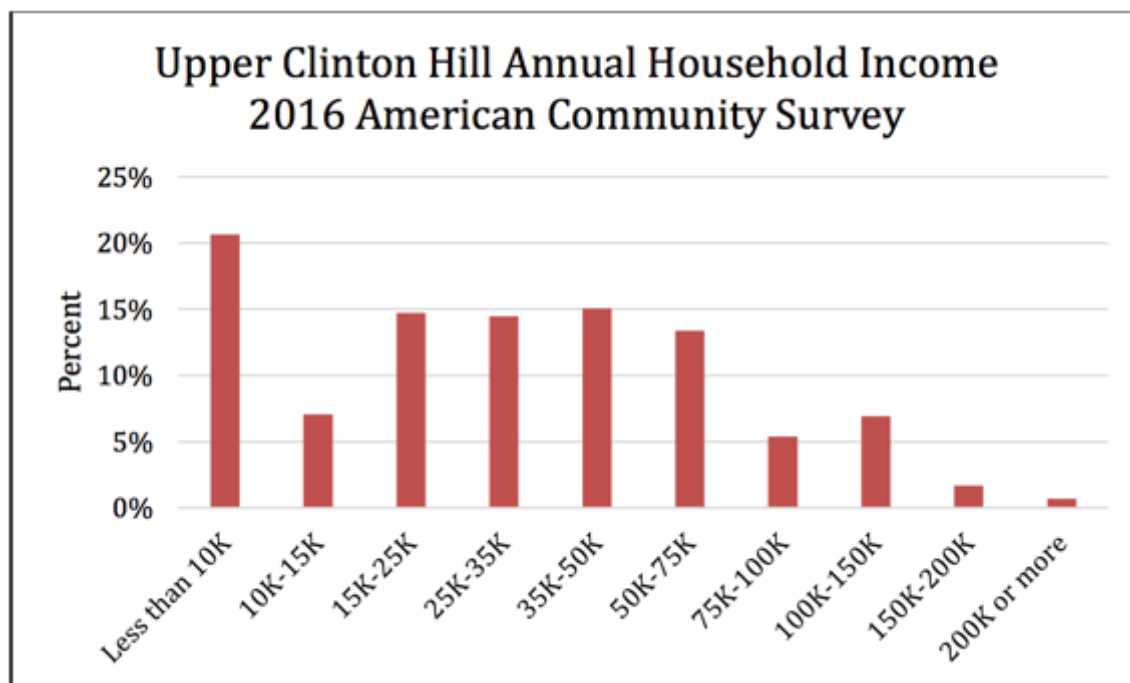
Graphs Depicting Housing and Income Profile of Upper Clinton Hill Residents.



Note. Source: Sadvnik et al., 2017–18, p. 5. All figures are in percentages.

Figure 5.6

Graph of Upper Clinton Hill Household Income



Note. Source: ACS 2016.

Figure 5.6 further dissects this economically distressed segment of families to show that over 20% of this group has a family household income of under \$10,000 per year; and an additional 7% of households have an annual income of only \$10–15,000.

During this 6-year period, the unemployment rate in Upper Clinton Hill had increased from 20% in 2010 to 27% in 2016. This increase is much greater than that of Newark city (3%).

Figure 5.7*Mapping of the Vacancy Rate in Upper Clinton Hill Housing*

Note. Source: Sadvnik et al., 2017–18, p. 18

Home Ownership

According to ACS 2016 5–year estimates and policy maps, the home ownership rate in Upper Clinton Hill has a home ownership rate of 24% and a rental occupancy rate of 76%. The vacancy rate in Upper Clinton Hill is 31% (Figure 5.7), very nearly the same percentage as the transiency rate at BRCIK Avon Academy. According to the 2016 ACS estimates, the median rent is \$1074 in Upper Clinton Hill. Renter affordability is

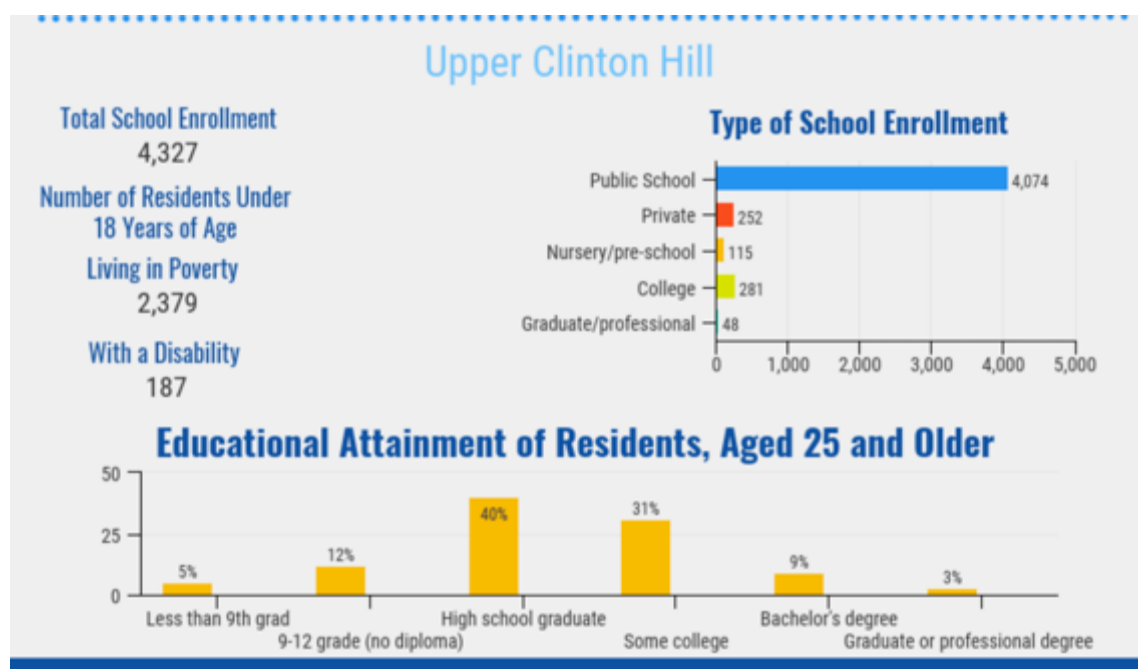
calculated as median gross rent (contract rent plus estimated average monthly cost of utilities) as a percentage of household income. The median gross rent as a percentage of household income is 42.4% in Upper Clinton Hill, higher than the average for Newark City (34.8%), as a whole.

Another criterion to measure ownership is vehicle ownership. Workers above 16 years old owning one vehicle is greater for Upper Clinton Hill (44%) when compared to Newark City (38%). However, 29% of Upper Clinton Hill workers do not own a vehicle, slightly higher when compared with Newark City (28%).

Educational Attainment

Figure 5. 8

Educational Attainment in Upper Clinton Hill Neighborhood, Newark, NJ



Note. Source: Sadovnik et al., 2017–18, p. 6

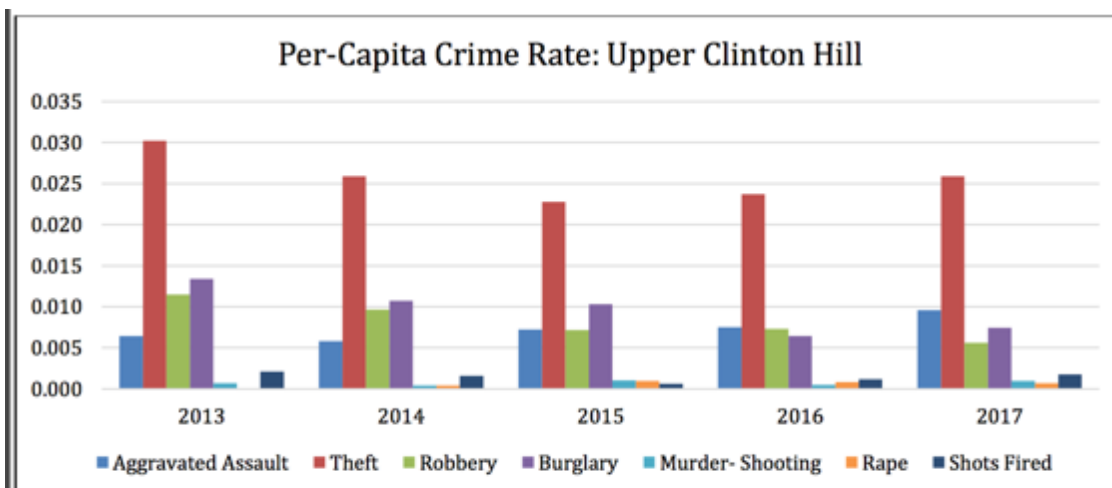
In Upper Clinton Hill 31.9% of the population between 18–24 years old have some college or associate degree compared to 23.9% in Newark (see Figure 5.8). However in both Upper Clinton Hill and Newark the percentage of the population 25 years and above with a higher education degree is less than 10% (includes associate degree, bachelor's degree or, graduate or professional degree). In Upper Clinton Hill 38% of 18–24 years old have a high school diploma (includes equivalency), compared to 35.7% in Newark City. The percentage of the population 25 years old and above with a high school graduate equivalency for Upper Clinton Hill is 39% (Newark City is 35.3%). Only 6% of 18–24 years old in Upper Clinton Hill have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 13.65% in Newark. In Upper Clinton Hill 20% of 18–24 years olds have less than a high school diploma (Newark is 18.5%). The percentage of the population 25 years or above who completed less than a 9th grade education in Upper Clinton Hill is 5% (Newark 14.1%). Among African American residents who are 25 years old or more, the percentage of residents who have at least a bachelor's degree ranges in Upper Clinton Hill from 10.4% in census tract 42 (closest to BAA) and 54, to 21% in census tract 52 (further corroborated in the map).

Crime

Figure 5.9 shows the crime rate and categories of highest crime in the neighborhood on a per capita basis. Theft was by far the highest incidence and category of crime experienced by residents in this neighborhood over a four-year period. The high incidence per capita of crime reflects related stress and trauma of children and families experiencing incidences of crime on a daily basis.

Figure 5.9

Per Capita Crime Rate for Upper Clinton Hill Neighborhood for the Years 2013–2017



Crime data used for this report are from the Newark Police Department within the period of 1/1/2013 to 1/31/2017. Overall, the per-capita crime rate for both neighborhoods is not significantly different. Per capita theft crime rate has been higher than other forms of crime for years 2013-2017.

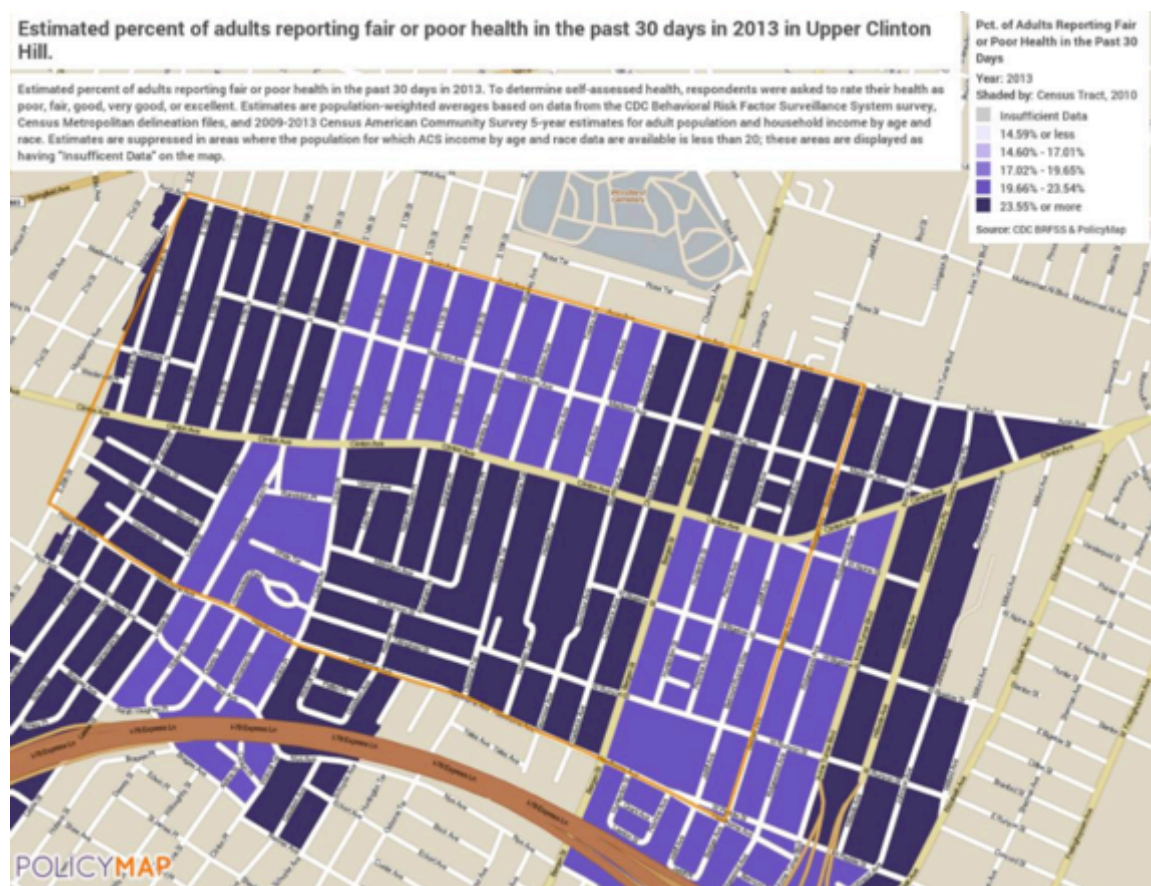
Note. Source: Sadovnik et al., 2017–18, p. 23.

Overall Health

The CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey asks respondents to rate their overall health over the past 30 days as poor, fair, good, very good, or excellent. In Upper Clinton Hill, 25.04% of adults reported fair or poor health over the past 30 days in 2013 (Newark =23.96%). The map presented below (Figure 5.10) shows how concentrated reports of fair or poor health are within the communities.

Figure 5.10

Estimated Percentage of Adults Reporting Fair or Poor Health Within the Past 30 Days (2013)



Note. Source: Sadvnik et al., 2017–18, p. 42.

Avon Avenue School

Figure 5.11

Avon Avenue School in Newark, NJ circa 1910 and in 2010



Avon Avenue School in 1910



BRICK Avon Academy Today

Built at the turn of the 20th century, Avon Avenue School is located in the South Ward of Newark, New Jersey at 219 Avon Avenue. Figure 5.11 shows a picture of the school (then and now). Figures 5.12 and 5.13 show the location of the school in Newark and relative to other schools in the area in 2009.

Figure 5.12

Avon Avenue School in Newark, NJ



Figure 5.13

From NPS District Map (2008) Districting for Avon Ave School (PINK center) and Madison Ave (Beige)



When BRICK stepped into Avon Avenue School in the AY 2010–11 year, there were 635 students enrolled—95% African American and 5% Hispanic. Of the total enrollment, 95% of students were eligible for free and reduced lunch (83% Free), and 13% were special needs. There were no English language learners recorded (data for 2010 from the NJ Department of Education Report Card, 2013). Figure 5.14 shows the student enrollment by grade level in the fall of 2010.

Figure 5.14

BRICK Avon Academy Student Enrollment and Special Needs Enrollment Year 1 (AY 2010–2011) by grade

Grade Level	Students (N)	Percent of Total Student Enrollment	Special Education Students (N)	Percent of Total Student Enrollment
Kindergarten	62	9.39	3	0.47
Grade 1	65	10.33	4	0.63
Grade 2	54	8.45	2	0.32
Grade 3	54	8.61	3	0.47
Grade 4	66	10.33	9	1.42
Grade 5	50	8.29	5	0.79
Grade 6	90	14.08	11	1.73
Grade 7	90	14.40	23	3.62
Grade 8	104	16.12	14	2.20
Total	635	100%	74	11.65%

Note. Source: NJ DOE School Report Card

Summary

The South Ward and Upper Clinton Hill community setting was an older neighborhood, once ethnically diverse with Jewish, Polish, and African American immigrants and migrants seeking a better life in the United States, now largely African American families who were economically fragile, suffered housing, economic, health and food insecurity. The South Ward was home to many mayors and elected officials (including Congressman Donald Payne, former mayor Sharpe James, and future mayor (2014) Ras Baraka. The housing was a mix of single and multiple family homes and apartment buildings. Families were predominately renters with incomes under \$25,000 per annum per household—and many under \$10,000 per year. The school was over 100 years old and was a K–8 neighborhood school. The majority of the students attending

Avon Avenue School were academically failing. This was the setting for the present study and the implementation in the fall of 2010 of BRICK Avon Academy.

Chapter 6 **B.R.I.C.K.—The Beginnings**

Chapter 6 presents the beginnings of B.R.I.C.K., prior to the first year of implementation at BRICK Avon Academy in 2010–2011: who were the leaders, what planning and groundwork occurred, what was proposed by BRICK to the Newark Public School (NPS) district? This context is pertinent to understanding what followed, how unusual it was, and what the greatest challenges were to the initial implementation of the approach and model..

Information about the beginnings of B.R.I.C.K. and the first year of implementation comes from an on–site, unpublished study by a team of independent researchers, which included the author (Zha et al., 2012).

The Beginnings of B.R.I.C.K.—Building Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids

In 2008, Dominique Lee—a high school social studies teacher at Malcolm X Shabazz High School in Newark—was frustrated and angry about the lack of reading skills that his students possessed. Lee was seeing most of his students had great potential, but mostly students who were unable to realize that potential because of their lack of foundational skills in reading and math. He could help them with their reading skills; however, they were so weak in reading that he was finding it very difficult to help his students with mastering subject content—content that required foundational skills that they had not acquired in elementary school. Lee saw this failure to adequately prepare and equip young people via education—especially very poor students predominately of color—as the current, most pressing civil rights issue of the day. Lee put out a call to his fellow Teach For America alumni teachers in Newark Public Schools to come together for dialogue and action.

Lee reached out to a group of NPS teachers, all TFA alumni, who came together to brainstorm about what could be done to change the alarming trajectory of failure for students in Newark public schools. Research pointed to literacy acquisition by grade three as a predictor of high school graduation and student academic success (*Early Warnings: Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*, 2010. A Kids Count Special Report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, www.aecf.org/resources/why-reading-by-the-end-of-third-grade-matters). Lee and this group of Newark teachers agreed that a key to turning the tide was to begin early, with Grades K–2, with a team of capable teachers who were committed to student success and to assuring that students would master literacy skills by Grade 3. These teachers would need support and resources (professional development and best practices). Over the next 18 months, this group of working teachers continued to research best practices of schools for children in high poverty neighborhoods.

School Reform Models

The group researched such reform models as Effective Schools (Edmonds, R., 1979), Mastery Learning (and Mastery Charter Schools), and International Baccalaureate (IB) schools. They went to visit some of those schools in person. Drawing from research-based best practices and these working models, the group began to build a philosophy, a vision and a working model for a school that they hoped to lead in Newark.

Effective Schools

The group learned about Ronald Edmonds' research on Effective Schools (1979). Edmonds suggested that the key characteristics of schools that are effective in educating high poverty children, include schools that have:

- an effective leader: a principal who is a strong instructional leader and who can help teachers diagnose and address student learning needs
- a clear academic–focused mission
- a safe, orderly environment supportive of children, teachers, staff and parents
- high expectations by all teachers for all students
- teaching mastery of reading, writing and math skills for all students
- frequent assessment to adjust instruction
- strong engagement of parents
- staying current and using research about effective practices

Mastery learning was “an alternative method of teaching and learning that involved assuring that students reach a level of predetermined mastery on units of instruction before being allowed to progress to the next unit” (David & Sorrell, 1995). Introduced to American education over 80 years ago, mastery learning had been found to be a very effective teaching and learning method. Although the concept was first developed in the 1920’s, Bloom (1971, 1974, 1976, 1984) was considered the founding theorist for mastery learning, and there have been many studies since the 1960’s that support this method (Guskey, 2007, 2010). Rather than considering *time* as the most important factor in teaching and learning, differentiated instruction is offered by teachers in small groups of students with the focus and quality of one-to-one tutoring. By using formative assessments and very specific learning objectives, teachers can help students to achieve mastery. Studies suggest that once mastery was achieved, students would be more motivated and confident in learning (Bloom, 1984; Guskey, 2010). Therefore, taking the time to achieve mastery of foundational knowledge and understanding would

be most effective in the long run for students. Studies have found that this approach is most effective when used with younger children in earlier grades.

Mastery Schools

In an effort to close the achievement gap for children in poor, urban neighborhoods Mastery Charter Schools founded its first school in 2001, using the mastery learning methods. Based in Germantown, PA, Mastery Charter School was now a network of schools located in the Philadelphia/Camden area. Mastery's central focus and mission was preparing students to be ready for successful post-secondary education and careers. This was accomplished by:

- outstanding teachers who engage students in rigorous, data-based instruction in a joyful, fun classroom environment
- teachers who receive appropriate support and professional development
- parents who are seen as “first teachers” and critical partners
- –students who are trained to be independent, critical thinkers
- (<http://www.masterycharter.org/about/board-of-trustees/>)
- assessment data from Mastery Charter schools suggests that Thomas Middle Mastery Middle School has 9 years of data showing an increase of 38% improvement in reading and 51% increase in math scores
(<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED559988.pdf>)
- the schools place an emphasis on positive school culture and safety

International Baccalaureate

High academic standards, strong student achievement, a customized curriculum, outstanding teacher professional development, and a global outlook, including multiple

language study, attracted BRICK founders to aspire to affiliate with this model. BRICK founders had hoped to become an IB school within the first five years of implementing BRICK Avon Academy.

The International Baccalaureate Schools (IB) were founded in Geneva, Switzerland in 1968, and their mission statement states:

The International Baccalaureate® aim to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right

Through regional offices, the IB supports schools that wish to become authorized to deliver IB programmes of education. The regional office also evaluates existing IB World Schools and provides professional development, such as events and workshops, in addition to other services. In the Americas, the Global Centre serves a broad and diverse range of students in public, private, independent and international school settings ... IB teachers and coordinators ...develop and promote the IB's curricula in almost 5,000 schools globally every day, in over 150 countries around the world. The IB supports schools and teachers to provide a rigorous, high-quality education, offering professional development that improves pedagogy and leadership. (<https://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/>)

The IB schools provide a pathway to school certification and charge a fee to become a school working toward certification, and a fee and standards for ongoing certification. The organization provides a curriculum and extensive teacher development opportunities and support worldwide. The IB model's high standards, progressive curriculum, and professional development for teachers was compelling, especially to Lee.

The Founding of B.R.I.C.K.

The group of educators that Lee assembled in Newark in 2008 came up with a name for their organization—“Building Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids (BRICK).”

BRICK was a reference to Newark’s mid-century nickname as an industrial “brick city.” Mr. Lee led the effort to incorporate BRICK as a non-profit Educational Management Organization (EMO), with its own organizational standing. He gained *pro bono* assistance in this effort from a local law firm (Lowenstein and Sandler). Lee also reached out for funding for their efforts and received support from the Newark Public Schools Office of Innovation and Change, as well as from the Victoria Foundation. This support and encouragement allowed the founding group to work together in evenings and on weekends after their full time teaching jobs), to visit best practice schools, and to move forward with crafting a proposal to the Newark Public Schools. Various members of the team visited successful schools locally and in other regions in order to learn about challenges and best practices. The schools visited included: Harriett Tubman School, Robert Treat Academy Charter School, Spark Academy Elementary School, and North Star Academy Charter School in Newark; International Baccalaureate schools in Cherry Hill, New Jersey and Atlanta, Georgia (Avondale International Elementary and Capital View Elementary schools); Amistad Academy Middle School in New Haven, Connecticut; and M. Hall Stanton School and the Mastery Charter Schools in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (BRICK Avon Academy/NPS SIG grant application, March 2011, p. 9–10).

The initial plan was to focus on start-up models as this was what the teacher-leader team envisioned future BRICK Academies to be. In order to gain more knowledge about best practices, the team also visited turnaround models. (“Start-up” and

“turnaround” are two of four models in NCLB legislation, as discussed earlier in the Literature Review—Chapter 2.) When searching for the right schools to visit, the definition of success was closely aligned with the 90/90/90 Schools concept which was a label designated for schools with high percentages (over 90%) of low-income and ethnic minority students who are achieving high academic outcomes (Reeves, 2000, 2003).

Borrowing from what they learned and combined with their years of teaching experience with Newark students, BRICK founders crafted their own unique school model for their first effort. Additionally, they recognized that one of the responsibilities of the organization as a non-profit would be to foster the development of more teacher-leader teams who would eventually run future BRICK schools. The BRICK founders’ idea was to assume management for a failing Newark public school in the South Ward of Newark, beginning with Grades K–2, and build up in subsequent years from these foundational grades (similar to charter school start-ups). Note that all the elementary schools in Newark’s South Ward were failing by state and national standards, and these were the schools sending students on to Shabazz High School, where Lee was a teacher. The group’s idea was to begin with one school of K–2 students, to address and insure students’ literacy competency, and to add a grade each year up to Grade 8. Starting with turning around one failing school, the idea was to add more schools over time, in order to eventually have a group or cluster of BRICK schools in Newark’s South Ward neighborhood. Each new BRICK school with a teacher-led founding team would use a similar process for research, planning, and proposal as the initial school. The BRICK founders emphasized that each planning process and subsequent BRICK school would have its own plan and characteristics, despite sharing the BRICK model and core values.

Like other “turnaround” reform models, the BRICK founders saw the benefit of building clusters of strong schools in order to share best practices, professional development, and other services (e.g., family services). Unlike many charter or turnaround models that focus solely on changes within a school and not within the broader neighborhood, the BRICK founders viewed a school as the potential center of a neighborhood that could serve as a catalyst for change beyond the school into the community. This model of viewing the school as a community center within a neighborhood is similar in some ways to the “full service” community school model (Dryfoos et al., 2005). The community schools model generally bring social service and youth development partners in the community together with the educators in a school to form a “full-service school” model (Dryfoos et al., 2005); whereas, with the BRICK model, the BRICK founders were teachers who would begin with turning the school around and then continuing to design supports for families which would gradually reach into and change the neighborhood.

High Quality Teachers

Central to the BRICK model was to make the school a teacher-run school, with shared leadership responsibilities. The BRICK founders believed that great teachers were the key to good schools and to turning around any failing school. They would recruit teachers who shared their own core beliefs, passion, and energy. Teacher-leaders were key to BRICK’s model to ensure student-centered learning and student success. Critical to the central role of BRICK’s teachers was the professional development and support that would be needed to help teachers meet their students’ learning and other needs. The school would be built upon a culture of trust and safety with shared values for high

expectations, and a sense of urgency about their work for student outcomes. Building a learning community that partnered with parents, families and community was also a core component of their model. The BRICK founders believed and proposed that more instructional time was needed than what was currently given in each school–day (i.e., extending the formal school day).

Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress—S.T.E.P.

One curriculum tool for helping teachers help students attain literacy competency that BRICK chose to adopt was the Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress (STEP) reading assessment system, developed by researchers at the University of Chicago’s Urban Education Institute led by Anthony Bryk and David Kerbow for use in Chicago public schools and beyond, including by KIPP Charter Schools (<https://www.uchicagoimpact.org/our-offerings/step>).

UChicago Impact’s STEP provides schools with a meaningful, developmental literacy assessment and professional learning that supports educators in using student data to increase the volume of students on track to reading proficiency (https://www.uchicagoimpact.org/sites/default/files/STEP_Onepager_sm.pdf).

Based upon Lee’s personal experience with international study in Southeast Asia, as well as BRICK’s goal to prepare students to become citizens contributing to the global economy, the BRICK group sought to use the standards of (and to eventually become certified as) an International Baccalaureate school, including offering at least two languages besides English (Mandarin and Spanish). The BRICK group’s values and beliefs were in many ways similar to those espoused in many charter schools. However, the group agreed that they wanted to focus their efforts on the traditional

neighborhood public school where the overwhelming majority of poor, failing students were enrolled. They agreed that they would like to test their assumptions by assuming management for one of the lowest-performing schools in one of Newark's poorest neighborhoods.

BRICK: The Founders

In 2009, Dominique Lee had issued an urgent invitation to current and former Teach For America alumni who were teaching in the Newark Public Schools to join in discussions together about they could do for Newark's students who were missing out on education. They talked about what they could do as teachers to help students in the public schools to access the opportunities that educational success would afford them. Lee had an idea the seed for a plan. Out of this initial group of teachers and discussions, there were six individuals who remained committed to the work and to the creation of a new, innovative initiative proposed by Lee. These six teachers became the founders of BRICK: Building Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids.

There were six founding teachers of BRICK (Zha et al., 2012; researcher interviews, 2012; Russakoff, 2015).

Dominique Lee was the founder, visionary, director, fund-raiser, and negotiator of BRICK. He graduated from the University of Michigan, and was a Teach For America (TFA) social studies teacher at Malcolm X Shabazz High School in Newark, staying on as an NPS teacher after his 2-year TFA contract (2005–07). He serves as the executive director and operations leader of BAA. Lee identified with his students at Shabazz, who were often 3–4 reading levels below their grade. Lee relates how he grew up in a poor, single-female headed household in Pontiac, Michigan When Lee was in high school, his

father, an executive at Exxon, came back into his life, opened him to new horizons, and demanded a higher standard of academic performance. Lee pulled up his GPA, attended college, and graduated as a third generation college graduate on his father's side, and a first-generation graduate on his mother's side.

Lee saw the trajectory for his Newark students as much like his own, especially without his father. He often said, "there but for the grace of God ..." about himself. He was passionate about changing the trajectory of life through educational means for Newark students.

Charity Haywood grew up in a poor, single-female-headed household family in Colorado. She was blessed to attend and graduate from Colorado College on a full scholarship. There, she met her husband, who became a civil rights attorney. In 1996, she came to Newark and taught for two years with TFA, staying on to teach for another decade and a half with the Newark Public Schools, mostly in South Ward Schools such as the Bragaw Avenue, and Chancellor Avenue Schools. She was the first person that Lee reached out to; at the time was a vice principal at Chancellor Ave School. She and Lee shared religious conviction and dedication to leadership, service, and humility. She and her husband had been active members of their church and community in Newark's South Ward. Over the years, the couple have "adopted" many Newark students, many of whom have lived with them, all of whom have gone on with her support to college. One of their daughters is now a teacher in Newark.

Christopher (Chris) Perpich grew up in Michigan and graduated from the University of Michigan. He came to Newark as a TFA teacher at Branch Brook Elementary School, a higher performing North Ward elementary school, where he taught

for three years. He completed his MA in School Leadership at Teacher's College, Columbia University. Perpich served as the founding vice principal at BRICK Avon (Grades 2–5) and played a critical role with educational design and guidance (curriculum, pedagogy, organization and communication) .

Bernadette Scott graduated from William Paterson University and served as a reporter for the Asbury Park Press for several years. In 2006, she came via TFA as an English teacher at Shabazz H.S., serving on that faculty with Lee.

Melinda (Mindy) Weidman (now Duchi) grew up in Lancaster, PA. She came to Newark as a TFA high school social studies teacher at Weequahic High School, and stayed on to teach in Newark. Weidman received her MPA in Educational Administration at Rutgers–Newark.

Princess Williams (now Mrs. Fils–Aimee) was the only BRICK founder who grew up in Newark. At a young age, she and her siblings fled with her Mom to seek refuge in a shelter from domestic violence. Despite poverty and occasional homelessness, her mother had high expectations for her children and Williams was a strong student. She was top of her class in 8th grade and won a prestigious scholarship through *A Better Chance* to Kent Place School (a prestigious all–girls independent school in Summit, NJ) for high school. Bridging two worlds (Newark and poverty with Kent Place and affluence), Williams excelled at both academics and dance. She was dedicated to the goal of becoming a physician and pediatric doctor. Plagued by the cultural divide and homelessness, Williams left Kent Place and came back to attend school in Newark for the last two years of high school at West Side High School. There she experienced a gaping lack of expectations for herself and her peers. She was later accepted to and

graduated from New York University. While there, she did an internship in tutoring public school students and decided to change her career goals from medical school to teaching. She served as a TFA teacher in her home of Newark at the Alexander St. School (2006–08) and stayed on as a teacher with NPS. Her vision was to help transform the schools in her hometown and change the trajectory of students in Newark.

The B.R.I.C.K. Proposal

By August of 2009, Lee represented the founding group (originally eight, but finally six founding members) in presenting a proposal for BRICK to Dr. Clifford Janey, state-appointed superintendent of Newark Public Schools. Lee had met New York University educational reformer Dr. Pedro Noguera (Broader, Bolder initiative) at a workshop, and Noguera helped to introduce Lee and the BRICK group to Janey and to gain the opportunity to present their proposal.

In his first two years as NPS superintendent, Dr. Janey had developed and launched a Strategic Plan called “Great Expectations” that invited innovative partnerships to address school failure (in line with No Child Left Behind federal guidelines). Despite the relative lack of teaching experience of the BRICK group, Janey encouraged them to further develop their proposal, and asked his director of Innovation, Dan Gohl, to meet weekly with the BRICK group to flesh out and further develop the proposal and the plan (Interview D. Lee) (Zha et al., 2012; and Russakoff, 2015).

The BRICK proposal asked the district to give the management of an existing failing NPS neighborhood elementary school to BRICK for “restart,” beginning with Grades K–2 and adding a grade per year. The school would not be a charter school, but would be a school that was “failing academically,” with all the same children as attended

the school in BRICK's "new" school, and still within the NPS administrative oversight. The management agreement would give BRICK flexibility within the parameters allowable by the teacher's Union contracts and state law for staffing. The agreement would give them flexibility with the staffing "floor plan" (designation of titles and roles could be flexible from current school personnel plan). The agreement would allow BRICK to be flexible with the budget, as well. BRICK would provide the management and leadership, and the district would provide administrative services including payroll, human resources, professional development, legal services, and facilities management. The proposal was also shared with the Newark Teachers Union, whose leadership originally gave the BRICK proposal support; and later, less so (Russakoff, 2015).

BRICK's leadership model promoted shared leadership and teacher-led schools. This was a relatively new concept in actual practice. A teacher-led charter school was started in Brooklyn by the United Teachers Federation (2005), and there were new teacher-led school initiatives in Minnesota (first teacher-led schools, 1994); and, more recently in Los Angeles, Boston and Detroit. Unlike charter models founded by other Teach For America alumni such as KIPP Charter Schools, BRICK was looking to work *within* the traditional credentialing system, using veteran NPS teachers rather than seeking to oust or circumvent this system (like in New Orleans, Goff, 2009); and within the traditional public school administrative bureaucracy. This exception is quite important.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was developed between NPS and BRICK spoke to determining and sharing best practices, stating that "BRICK emerged out of a collaborative effort to create a new model for delivery of NPS

educational services in Newark, to improve schools and school communities, develop best practices and share them throughout the District” (Source: BRICK/ NPS Memorandum of Understanding signed 3/11/11). According to the MOU agreement between BRICK and the NPA district, 2010–2011 would be a benchmark year followed by development and agreement upon more specific expectations and goals for improvement in student academic scores and performance in subsequent years. Metrics for this review of progress would include: 3rd party review selected by NPS; attendance; NJ state test scores; promotion rate; school climate; and state and federal metrics such as Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) and an Academic Performance index.

In April, 2010, Dr. Janey got back to the BRICK group with a surprising ultimatum. He would only approve the proposal and move ahead with a Memorandum of Understanding between NPS and BRICK if the group agreed to take on the management of a whole K–8 school (not K–2)—“take it or leave it.” The BRICK group, surprised by the change in strategy and what it would mean, nevertheless decided to move forward. This changed the category of their proposal under NCLB from a “restart” school to a “turnaround school.” More importantly, it changed the demands on the team from a primary focus on early K–2 literacy to having to additionally address the learning needs and literacy skills deficits in elementary and middle school adolescents, and all at the same time. It was not until June that the group learned that their school for September 2010 would be the K–8 Avon Avenue School, home to 640 students. This school fit the “failing school” criteria, identified in the bottom 2% of failing schools in NJ, and having the very worst 8th grade scores in Newark in math on the NJ ASK (2008–09 year): only 12% proficient (Newark Kids Count, 2010, ACNJ).

The announcement about the new management agreement between Newark Public Schools (NPS) and BRICK went out from the NPS superintendent to the teachers at Avon Avenue School *after* the school closed (in July). This gave teachers at the school as little notice and choice about being part of the BRICK year one launch as it gave the BRICK team in shaping their first year faculty. Charity Haygood—named as the new BRICK Academy principal—did not get the keys to the school until early July, less than 45 days before the opening of school. By that time it was too late for changes to be made in teaching assignments, so the BRICK team also inherited the faculty, as it was. Similarly, the faculty learned about new management of their school with no opportunity to request a change of venue. By July the most desirable district positions in other schools had been announced and filled. In other words, BRICK and the Avon faculty were, in so many words, “stuck with one another” for the first year of the implementation of the BRICK model. Undaunted, the BRICK team looked hopefully forward to introducing themselves to the teachers and sharing the BRICK model to be implemented by them.

Chapter 7 **BRICK Avon Academy—Year 1 Launch (AY 2010–2011)**

Preparing to Open B.R.I.C.K. Avon Academy

BRICK leadership had to “hit the ground running” in July and August 2010 to prepare to open the school. Somehow, in July, a rumor spread amongst teachers and the Avon Ave neighborhood that BRICK was a charter school, and was “taking over” Avon Ave School. The BRICK leaders got wind of this rumor and worked hard to dispel fears created by change and misinformation. As a remedy to the charter school rumor that was causing confusion in the neighborhood about who could enroll, the BRICK founders team fanned out into the Avon Ave neighborhood.

Armed with a year-end student roster of over 600 students, they went door to door to 400 homes to introduce themselves and BRICK, and to invite families to come to an August welcome barbeque at the school. Almost 400 family and community members came to the end-of-August barbeque (an impressive turnout). Students attending the barbeque were given T-Shirts emblazoned with the school’s new BRICK Avon Academy name and logo, helping to spread needed positive ownership in the community for the change.

Additionally, Haygood, the new principal and a South Ward resident, appealed successfully to the district administration to put lights up on the basketball courts in the school playground, saying they wanted the school to be a positive and welcoming *beacon* for the neighborhood. (Note: a triple homicide of three promising college students had happened on another dark Newark school playground a few weeks before.) The installation of new lights on the school’s playground basketball courts allowed the

neighborhood to play basketball on the courts after dark, and went a long way to signal a positive new partnership between BRICK with the community.

Meanwhile, Lee was able to get the district to put a fresh coat of paint in primary colors throughout at least two of the three floors (hallways and classrooms) of the building before school's opening. This gave the visual feel of a new and energetic "fresh start."

Introducing B.R.I.C.K. and the BRICK Model to the Teachers

In July, the BRICK management team invited all the teachers at Avon Avenue School to a special introductory meeting. Only a handful of the teachers responded to the invitation to meet at the Robert Treat Hotel in order to meet one another and to learn about the BRICK model. Most of the teachers and staff stayed away because they were angry that the school district had not told them about the change in management and leadership at the school. For those who did attend, they tried to to the young BRICK founders. One of the positive things that came out of that somewhat adversarial meeting between incumbent Avon Ave teachers and the BRICK founding team was the strong suggestion by veteran Avon Avenue teachers that the BRICK management team should not completely change the name of Avon Avenue School. The school had an important 100-year history as an anchor in the neighborhood. Rather than just calling the school "B.R.I.C.K. Academy," the BRICK founders listened to those teachers. They decided the school would be called *B.R.I.C.K. Avon Academy*, signaling a compromise, and a change in approach but not in "trust." It would still be a *neighborhood school* and anchor. This was an important decision that symbolized the partnership the BRICK founders hoped for

and believed in. It was a first step in building a relationship with some of the teachers at the school.

Despite the BRICK team's outreach efforts, many of the teachers did not even attend the 3-day orientation and training at the school in August (reduced from a week), making it difficult to get all the teachers on board before the school year began. Teachers were central to BRICK teacher-driven model's implementation and success.

Teachers returned to school at the end of August. Dominique, Charity, and the BRICK team met one to one with each of the teachers to introduce themselves. They shared their excitement about and commitment to the Avon teachers and students, and their goals for the new school year. The teachers were skeptical and resistant to yet more words and another reform effort that cast a poor light on past failures of teachers at Avon Ave School.

Gradually, however, the BRICK team's emphasis on the central role of teachers and working toward the well-being of the students, along with their actions began to signal a change. One such action was when Lee asked teachers to submit a list of needed classroom supplies. Fulfilling most of these supply requests for teachers within a couple of weeks in early September was a signal to teachers (who were used to getting almost no supplies on their lists paid by the school, and certainly not within the first weeks of school!) that there might be a positive side for teachers in this unexpected change. Perhaps the BRICK team's actions might match their words. Lee's expedient fulfilling of the teacher's classroom supplies went a long way with a number of the teachers to begin to build a positive relationship with the new BRICK team (Teacher Interviews, Knauer, Spring 2013).

Events and Context in the NPS District Leading Up To the First 2010–2011 Year of BRICK Avon Academy

Just before school opening for the 2010–2011 academic year, Governor Chris Christie announced that NPS state–appointed superintendent Dr. Clifford Janey’s three year contract would NOT be renewed at the end of the upcoming academic year (2010–11). This was a major announcement, as it meant that Dr. Janey’s tenure and plans were not being supported. Part of the impact for this first year of BRICK’s implementation was that the NPS superintendent became somewhat absent (looking for a new post), and ineffectual during this year. NPS staff continued to operate, but without the force of a mandate behind the superintendent’s well defined reform plan, and without a district leader. Efforts for the larger Newark community were focused on who would be appointed as NPS superintendent by the governor, with agreement of Newark’s mayor, Cory Booker. It was well known that both Governor Christie and Mayor Booker were advocates of charter schools, and under their administration Newark’s charter school population had increased rapidly. One impact of charter schools (many of which were not unionized) was a decrease in NPS overall budget funds (due to funds being channeled to charters on a per pupil basis). This increased financial pressure on NPS administration budgets, NPS school budgets, and the Newark Teachers Union. The district was already saddled with severely aging buildings (many over 100 years old, like Avon Avenue), and a mandate to meet the needs of all students under state statutes (vs. charter schools which selected students by application and lottery; and could jettison students back to the local district whom they felt were not suited to the charter’s environment or abilities).

The overall effect of this political decision by the Governor to end Janey’s contract at the end of AY 2010–11 was that there was no direct ally in the district

superintendent—more of an absentee—for the first year of the BRICK Avon implementation. However, Dan Gohl, the superintendent’s director of school innovation, remained an invaluable support and ally to the BRICK leadership team.

Year 1: BRICK Avon Academy Opens for the AY 2010–2011 School Year

On September 9, 2010, BRICK welcomed over 600 new and returning students to the new “B.R.I.C.K. Avon Academy.” BRICK Avon Academy had 635 total students in the 2010–2011 academic year. The enrollment is broken down by grade in Table 7.1 below. Based on BRICK Avon Academy’s reporting metrics to NPS, the student attendance rate was 90.5% for the 2010–2011 academic year as of March 2011 (BRICK administrative records and documents shared with researchers, Zha et. al, 2012).

Table 7.1

BRICK Avon Academy Student Enrollment and Special Needs Enrollment Year 1 (AY 2010–2011) by grade

Grade Level	Students (N)	Percent of Total Student Enrollment	Special Education Students (N)	Percent of Total Student Enrollment
Kindergarten	62	9.39	3	0.47
Grade 1	65	10.33	4	0.63
Grade 2	54	8.45	2	0.32
Grade 3	54	8.61	3	0.47
Grade 4	66	10.33	9	1.42
Grade 5	50	8.29	5	0.79
Grade 6	90	14.08	11	1.73
Grade 7	90	14.40	23	3.62
Grade 8	104	16.12	14	2.20
Total	635	100%	74	11.65%

Note. Source: NJ DOE School Report Card

It is relevant to note here that BRICK Avon Academy was the receiving school for middle school students from Madison Avenue School (K–5). In other words, students who attended the Madison Avenue School for Grades K–5 transferred to BRICK Avon Academy for Grades 6–8 and merged with the sixth grade students who were already attending BRICK Avon Academy as their neighborhood school since kindergarten. This meant that between the 5th and 6th grade the middle school population essentially doubled with the influx of new students from Madison Ave School. This larger class size continued through the eighth grade. This presented an additional challenge to the BRICK Academy learning community, as they not only had to address students who were behind in reading and math skills, but also would have to seek to orient and include a sizeable new group of middle school adolescents to the school in the BRICK approach and model for high expectations and student accountability. BRICK’s original implementation focus on Grades K–2 did not anticipate a first year which also required meeting the academic and social needs of a sizeable middle school within the same building.

BRICK Avon Academy Leadership AY 2010–2011

Splitting the Role of the Principal into Two Roles/People

The BRICK School Leadership Team (SLT) draws from the administrative model of Mastery Charter Schools in Philadelphia, whereby the traditional principal’s role of being both instructional leader and manager is dissected and distributed among several individuals (Mastery Charter Schools, February 2011, http://www.masterycharter.org/files/MCS_Overview_Feb_2011.pdf). BRICK explained the importance of the split in roles as follows:

BRICK Avon Academy for teaching and learning is implementing a strong Response to Intervention (RTI) system. The RTI model can provide a framework

in which data will inform educational decisions and judgments, and provide the basis for decisions about interventions for remediation and acceleration of student learning. In order to implement the RTI program with fidelity and to produce rapid, significant change, the following will be implemented: *1) change in the role of the principal from the managerial leader to instructional leader. The principal and the school leadership team need to focus on student learning and quality of teaching and learning, instead of focusing on management and administration work at school. Therefore, BRICK Avon Academy (BAA) aims to modify the staffing structures enabling them to create a series of key operational positions all of which are designed to enable the principal to appropriately delegate specific management tasks to other staff. These positions were established to help ensure that the principal has sufficient time to provide strategic leadership and direction by placing an unrelenting focus on instructional leadership* (BAA: SIG proposal, April 2011).

By splitting the instructional and managerial roles of the principal and making the principal the “instructional leader” (but also giving much of the responsibility for the facility, school operations, and budget to a “director of operations”), the person commonly known as the “principal” was freed to focus upon instructional leadership and teacher support. Thus, the BRICK school principal was the chief instructional leader, and worked hand in hand with the school operational leader to run the school (two people instead of just one principal). In the proposal, the six founding teachers would take on various roles to share the school management.

Leadership Structure/Staffing Plan

In the actual implementation of the model for the first year of implementation, there were five lead teachers as administrators on the leadership team:

The principal/*teacher* (Ms. Charity Haygood) was the instructional leader for the school. In addition, she did specific classroom observations and teacher support for Grades K–2; and served as the overall school leader.

The *school operations Manager* (SOM) (Dominique Lee) ensured that operations ran smoothly. This included activities of budget, payroll, overall data, purchasing systems (making certain that teachers had the supplies they needed), and facility. He was the point of contact for non-instructional communication and voluminous requests from central NPS offices. In addition, Mr. Lee served as an overall inspirational leader and extra professional educator on site. BRICK had decided that the SOM needed to have administration certification so that he/she was qualified to sign off on budgets and operations documents without interfering with the principal's instructional role.

The *two vice principals* Mr. Perpich (K–5) and Mr. Chapman (6–8) served as instructional leaders for primary and middle grades. Mr. Perpich did observations, teacher support, and curriculum for 3–5; and Mr. Chapman for Grades 6–8. Mr. Chapman was highly qualified in math and science (not language arts). He said he served in the middle school as overall community relations, peace keeper and disciplinarian, as well.

The technology director was also the *data leader and extended day* director (Mindy Weidman) and integrated the BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life) afterschool program. More discussion of the extended day program will be included further on in the chapter.

The *lead literacy teacher/coach* was Bernadette Scott.

The *lead kindergarten teacher* was Princess Williams. She filled a vacant teaching position at the school.

School Decision-Making and Staffing Structure: Providing Broader School Leadership and Developing a Professional Learning Community

In the first year of BRICK Avon Academy (AY 2010–11), there were 30 classroom teachers (including 2 special needs classrooms), 6 enrichment teachers, 10

support staff, and 19 other staff members at BRICK Avon Academy. Over 50% of classroom teachers taught all or most academic subjects in a self-contained classroom setting. BRICK also filled one or two vacant teacher positions and created and hired a teacher for K–3 second language, i.e., Mandarin Chinese*, all in this first implementation year (2010–2011). (*Changing the “floor plan” to hire a Mandarin teacher who was not already in the BAA staffing pattern was a struggle. A teacher was recruited by BAA and the teacher was finally approved by NPS Central office to be hired as of February.)

School Governance

The BRICK Avon Academy model sought to create an environment where everyone was a leader. Based on this (and to meet NPS District and NCLB mandates), BRICK Avon Academy formed a School Governance Council to ensure that the entire school community was committed to and responsible for the planning, implementation and monitoring of the educational plan, school budget and operations. The School Governance Council included the principal; at least one stakeholder from each constituency: BRICK, NTU representative, instructional staff; non-instructional staff; parents; students (6–8 grade); and other members of the immediate community. The principal was to develop staff instructional capacity and provide opportunities for sharing authority to guide the learning agenda. While the School Governance Council was somewhat operative in 2010–11, much of the interaction, planning, and decision-making was done outside of the formal council at grade level and teams of teachers’ meetings, and meetings of staff with BRICK leaders (Zha et al., 2012). In the 2010–11 teacher survey, 29 percent of teachers indicated that they held leadership positions at BRICK (Zha et al., 2012).

In addition, the executive director and founder of BRICK worked alongside the principal providing strategic leadership and direction to the school. This included developing and promoting staff institutional capacity and providing opportunities for teacher leaders to share the authority for guiding the learning agenda. Within Grades K–5 the school established Grade Level Leaders (GLL).

GLLs served as lead facilitators at common planning times and other grade level meetings. The GLL's meet together as a Vertical Team (comprised of other GLLs) to establish transparency and coherence among grade levels, achievement benchmarks and curriculum. The GLL's also acted as an ambassadors for his/her grade level. They met regularly with the leadership team to share information regarding grade level input and to gather new information from teachers to pass on to the leadership team. Additionally, GLL's coordinate paperwork for GLT (data, assessments, etc.) and gather instructional resources for GLT based on discussions, observations and data (BRICK Transformation Project Description). In Grades 6–8 the school had established a department team structure with the four department leaders: language arts, mathematics, science and humanities serving as the “instructional leaders.”

According to the BRICK model, the central component of the transformation of BRICK Avon Academy for teaching and learning was implementing a strong Response to Intervention (RTI) system. The RTI model provided a framework in which data were to inform educational decisions and judgments, and provide the basis for decisions about interventions for remediation and acceleration of student learning.

The Implementation of the Components of the BRICK Model

There were two overarching goals of the BRICK model to be implemented at BRICK Avon Academy (BAA). One was to prepare children who would be able to engage in meaningful civic participation in the global economy, and the other was to empower teachers as leaders who would prepare children for this task (School Improvement Grant Application, Project Abstract. April 2011). These goals were supported by the model's five guiding principles: whole–student focus, academic environment, team value, efficiency, and professional development. Through a globally minded curriculum, an extended day program, individualized professional development, and community and family partnerships, BRICK's goal was to provide students with the opportunity to be college– and life–ready in an interconnected global society (2011 BRICK website: <http://www.bricknewark.org>).

There Were Five Key Guiding Principles of the BRICK Model (from the Bricknewark.Org Website)

- *Whole–Student Focus:* in order to close the achievement gap the whole student must be addressed: academic, physical and emotional health, and character development;
- *Academic Environment:* an educational environment where the joy of learning and high expectations is the norm and children are empowered daily with rigorous material to become life–long learners;
- *Team Value:* stakeholders will foster an environment where staff members are committed, not compliant, to the mission of educating children; creating an exceptionally professional, collegial, and stimulating environment where

everyone has adequate support, a real voice, and the tools they need to be triumphant is essential to our school culture;

- *Efficiency*: operations of the school shall be separate from academics and shall run on a business model. This will allow teachers to concentrate only on academics and will ensure all resources are funneled into the classroom; and
- *Professional Development*: Research-based professional development will be differentiated and tailored made to address student needs. Teachers will have ongoing support to learn how best to adjust their teaching to the learning needs of their students (2011 BRICK website: <http://www.bricknewark.org>).

The Key Components of the BRICK Model were Explicitly Stated as:

- School Leadership and Decision-Making
- Practice and Pedagogy: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- Individualized professional development
- Extended Learning Time
- Community and Family Partnerships

These key components of BRICK's model closely mirror Bryk et al.'s (2010) research findings with Chicago Public Schools and the components that they found were essential for school improvement. At the top of BRICK's list for implementing their model was *respect*: respect for teachers and for students. BRICK's model reflects research on effective schools and turning around failing schools.

Practice and Pedagogy: Providing Focused, Student–Centered Instruction and Increasing Learning Time

The instructional program at BRICK was to be driven by five “Instructional Bricks (from BRICK documents)”:

- *Long term, unit, and lesson planning:* Grade Level and Departmental Teams collaboratively were to plan all core subject areas for Grades K–8. They were to begin the year by establishing a roadmap for students, an outline for how instruction would be spread over the course of the year. GLT and DT identified what knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes and actions students were to acquire by year’s end, and then grouped them into units.
- *Common planning time within the school day:* This was essential for teachers to effectively plan all units by GLT together.
- *Data informed instruction and common assessment:* Teachers determined multiple forms of formative and summative assessments for each unit in order to determine progress towards unit goals. Teachers then used the data gathered to inform their practice throughout the year.
- *Technology/blended learning:* BRICK explained “two lenses for use of technology: Adaptive and Transformational.” *Adaptive technology* would support teachers in providing differentiated learning at unprecedented levels for each student at his/her own pace. Classroom computer centers would allow students access to adaptive software programs. *Transformational technology* would transform the learning process for students by increasing student engagement and by providing multiple avenues to expose students to higher–order thinking skills. While these ideas about technology were

introduced in the first year of implementation, the state of technology at the school would not support these goals. Discussions about technology in the first year served as more of a basis for “needs assessment and planning,” as reflected in the School Improvement Grant (SIG) process and application completed by the school community during the first year. The awarding of the federal SIG grant to BRICK for Years 2, 3, and 4, allowed the implementation of the technology plan to unfold during the second and third years of BRICK implementation (See Chapters 8 and 9).

- “Student investment and choice at BRICK was to teach students to own their own learning experiences. Teachers would spend a significant time at the beginning of the year investing students in their learning experience and reinforcing these mindsets throughout the year” (2011 BRICK website: <http://www.bricknewark.org>).
- During each unit, students were to be offered multiple avenues and opportunities to explore ideas and topics of their own choosing.

In BRICK’s model, teachers employed a three part cycle—planning, implementation, and reflecting—to deliver effective instruction. Teachers met together regularly as grade level teams. One teacher from each grade assumed leadership as a Grade Level Leader. Grade Level Leaders (GLLs) directed Grade Level Teams. Each GLL also met with other GLLs to form a Vertical Team which had the responsibility of establishing transparency and coherence across grade levels.

The initial proposal by the BRICK founders was for an early elementary school, beginning ideally in the first year of implementation with Grades K–2 and building up

grades over subsequent years. The BRICK team had planned for early elementary grades, but not for middle school grades. In adopting the entire K–8 BRICK Avon Academy, some of the planning for Grades 6–8 had to be done this first year at the same time as implementing the model. Having tracking systems for student progress and assessing student competency and mastery of key literacy and math knowledge was a focus for the BRICK model, and was a part of the technology/ infrastructure needs assessment. In the K–3 primary grades, a curriculum incorporating the STEP assessment for reading comprehension and literacy mastery was implemented as a part of the BRICK model. A more in depth assessment of the student outcomes for the STEP program is provided and discussed later in this chapter.

For the upper grades, trans–disciplinary units and backwards planning were central to the model. In the first year, the teachers began to work together on backwards planning a unit of instruction as a part of laying the groundwork for implementing this part of the model the next year. For example, teachers worked together on what math concepts students should master by the year’s end, and then built the curriculum content and lesson units backwards to lead to mastery.

Besides the frequent informal assessments used by teachers to measure student learning on any lesson, most of the other assessment and tracking tools and curriculum used at BAA in the first year were NPS district mandated.

The district had trouble providing skills and competency assessment tools which were aligned with the State Core Standards. BRICK used the Connected Math district curriculum for Grades 5–8, but found it ineffective and unaligned with state standards. Teachers at BRICK developed an in–school math assessment which was aligned with

state standards, but this caused confusion. Although BRICK was to have autonomy in implementation, the BAA leadership had to choose their battles with the district regarding curriculum. With middle school math, the NPS district declined to allow BRICK to choose an alternative curriculum, despite the mismatch between the Everyday Math standards and the State Core Competency Standards.

The following quote from an interview during the spring of the first year of implementation describes the BRICK model for how teachers used a framework of learning goals in each subject for each grade level. Teachers analyzed student assessment data to plan and teach according to each student's learning needs. Assessments were also used to measure student learning outcomes and mastery. Teachers at BRICK Avon were expected to:

- collaboratively plan trans-disciplinary units built around 6 themes that spanned the year;
- to use multiple forms of formative and substantive assessment data to track student achievement; and
- to use a BRICK long term unit and lesson planning.

BRICK founder Lee stated:

At BRICK, we believe that our teachers have the responsibility to be the greatest influence in the success of our students. To that end, BRICK teachers utilize a disciplined Instructional Cycle that consists of planning, implementing and reflecting. Planning starts by identifying what essential skills and knowledge students must master. Teachers then determine appropriate assessments and the most effective method of instruction to ensure student mastery. During implementation, teachers commit to following established plans and collecting both formative and summative data from students. Teachers then reflect on the effectiveness of the instruction based on both formative and summative assessment data and adjust future planning, including personal professional development. Interview with D. Lee, founder and director (Zha et al., 2012).

All of these aspects of practice were being introduced in this first year of implementation. While teachers were familiar with many of these, the use of specific and continual data to drive instruction was a new emphasis for some teachers.

In keeping with the goal to implement the International Baccalaureate (IB) program beginning in 2012 and with certification by 2014, the BRICK leadership immediately began to recruit a Mandarin Chinese teacher. This process was not easily accomplished. A teacher was identified from outside of the district. The hiring process took much longer than expected. With perseverance, Lee and Haygood did manage to get a Mandarin teacher hired at BRICK by late January, 2011, so that K–3 students had the opportunity to begin to learn Mandarin Chinese.

Time: How was Time Structured to Support Key Activities such as Teacher Collaboration, Leadership and Governance Structure? What Works?

As was stated previously, time for planning and collaboration was key to teaching practice and pedagogy at BRICK Avon. In order to effectively plan all units, it was essential for grade level teachers to have scheduled time together to plan. Thus, BRICK committed to providing two 90 minute sessions per week to each Grade Level Team for collaborative planning time. The planning time could be used in the following ways:

- planning future transdisciplinary units
- planning units outside the programs of inquiry
- collaboratively assessing student work
- inputting and analyzing student data
- observing teachers on different grade levels
- engaging or leading professional development

This time, plus 45-minute prep periods, were built into BRICK's schedule this first year. Both having the time to collaborate and the activity of teacher collaboration around student learning were new to many of the teachers at BRICK Avon (Zha et al., 2012).

Time for collaborative planning was critical to the BRICK's decision-making and teacher-led practice model. The BRICK team introduced dispersed leadership roles across the school, which included one teacher for each Grade level K–5 serving as a “grade level leader” and a “department lead-teacher” in Grades 6–8 for math, science, language arts, and social studies. The BRICK team created common planning time for K–5 teachers to meet by grade level to review student assessments, collaborate and plan. They also created time for vertical teams made up of the grade-level leader teachers to meet to align the literacy, math, writing terminology and goals across the Grades in K–5; and by departmental meetings in Grades 6–8. Time created for these sessions was in addition to the required (by contract) teacher's preparation periods.

Learning new programs such as the Strategic Teaching and Evaluation Program (STEP) literacy assessment, required that K–3 teachers receive a lot of hands on training about the program during their grade level meetings and monthly professional development sessions. (STEP was a reading comprehension assessment and instructional program developed at the University of Chicago. More will be said about this instructional tool in Chapter 10.) With STEP, teachers learned about the new reading assessment and how to administer it individually to students four times a year (initial, December, March and June). They learned how to use student data from these assessments to better support student learning and reading comprehension. STEP was a

very intensive program requiring a lot of teacher training, reflection, planning and differentiated learning strategies. The proof of the value of the time and effort by teachers and by students was evident in the progress of students in literacy by the end of the first year.

The chronic academic failures of students over years were reflected in State assessments like NJASK. BRICK engaged in a search for a curriculum that could better support teachers to help meet student learning needs. It was essential that such a curriculum would also provide high interest reading for a diversity of reading levels, especially in middle school. The district was using “Connect Math” for middle school across the district. Teacher leaders at BRICK determined that this curriculum was not serving students well and that the RAMP UP curriculum would better serve the needs of BRICK students. BRICK requested (to the district) a change to a new math curriculum for the middle school. They requested a change to RAMP Up, a math curriculum that provided age appropriate materials at a number of student ability levels, and frequent assessments that allowed teachers to see in more depth and detail which skills students were needing more help in. The district refused BRICK’s request to change from Connect to Ramp Up, despite the BRICK MOU for flexibility and the obvious problem with student performance (failure) over years. When their request for Ramp Up was denied by the district, the middle school teachers worked together doing “backwards planning” to develop and craft math curriculum units and assessments more aligned with the Core Content Standards than Connect Math that they could use with their students.

Similarly, the upper grade literacy curriculum for students who were many grade levels behind in reading was not meeting the needs of BRICK students and teachers.

BRICK's Bernadette Scott had used Read 180 at Weequahic High School, and the faculty could clearly see the benefit of this program. The district again denied BRICK's request to switch to Read 180 as the literacy curriculum for middle school. BRICK's strategy was to have Bernadette Scott work with all middle school students (Grades 6–8) in groups of 24 at least once each week in order to work on literacy skills and then to help teachers know where to focus with differentiated learning strategies for each student (revealed through use of Read 180). The teachers continued to use the district curriculum in partnership with Read 180.

Thus, in the first and second year of BRICK Avon's implementation, teachers were engaged in assessing the current curriculum against student needs and achievement; and some were engaged in actually designing curriculum and assessments when the NPS District denied certain requests for change in curriculum and strategies in both reading and math. This happened more in the middle school grade levels, grade levels the BRICK founders had NOT focused upon for start-up. In the lower grades, especially K–3, the BRICK founders had done extensive research and had proposed curriculum changes such as the STEP assessment program for reading as a part of their proposal/ approval and MOU (Zha et al., 2012).

Professional Development Structure: Providing Effective Teacher Development

For teachers, BRICK Avon Academy executed part of its mission by providing individual professional development. Both NPS and BRICK Avon Academy needed to support and measure the instructional changes of each teacher. To provide a scope and sequence (areas of need and plan for support) for recording and tracking the progress of teachers, the BRICK Avon Academy committed to providing all teachers with daily

common planning time, individually tailored professional development, and scaffolded growth plans.

During the first year of implementation, much of the professional development centered upon training and supporting teachers with new curriculum, such as the STEP and READ 180 programs. Teachers were also supported to develop units and assessments for math and science. A number of teachers also reported being encouraged to seek out individual professional development and growth workshops and opportunities (Zha et al., 2012). Implementation of professional development at BAA in 2010–2011 was also driven in part by both building community and teacher leadership, as well as observing and supporting teachers.

Many teachers had not had teacher–administrative observations or in–depth reviews and associated professional development for years (if ever). The BRICK leadership team reported finding that almost all BRICK Avon teachers were deeply committed to the well–being of their students. In past years, pre–BRICK, many teachers simply had not had professional development (hereafter also referred to as PD) support. In the past, teachers had not received demands to set high academic expectations WITH the support and tools to do so. Gradually, a level of trust and community was developed between the BAA leadership team and many of the BAA teachers in the first year. This happened in part through the beginning of individual teacher assessments, professional development, and coaching. The principal, vice principals and reading and math coaches all played a critical role in supporting teachers with PD, classroom observation and modeling, grade level and individual coaching. The difficulty for the BRICK team was to assess and decide which teachers could and would be able to adapt and develop their

teaching skills and strategies quickly enough to support and serve the BRICK students under this new urgent rigorous approach for the second year of implementation at BAA. The BRICK team lamented that some wonderfully dedicated and caring teachers had not received professional modeling, support and development soon enough in their careers to sharpen and shape their teaching skills sufficiently by the end of the first year. Other teachers had trouble adjusting to and working with gathering and reflecting on data in such data-driven, student centered teaching models.

The BRICK leadership team had to decide by February or March, 2011, which teachers they would invite back for Year 2, and which grades and teaching and staff positions they needed to recruit for their Year 2 BRICK Avon teaching team. Teachers also had to decide whether they wished to remain at BRICK Avon for another year with the BRICK model, or look for placement at a more traditional district school. Teachers with tenure, closer to retirement might decide that retirement or a change of schools would be more secure for them than remaining at BRICK Avon. Some other teachers who had hoped to remain at the school, were encouraged by the BRICK leaders to leave BRICK Avon and to apply for a position in the NPS district elsewhere. This was especially true for teachers that BRICK leaders thought would not be able to achieve satisfactory teaching reviews and make professional progress quickly enough in the new rigorous BRICK Avon Academy data-driven climate.

An additional factor in the decision-making process about which teachers would return for the 2011–12 (Year 2) school-year was BRICK's plan to extend the formal learning day by nearly two hours per day for the coming year. Teachers who had family responsibilities (children) or second jobs had to weigh the time and cost of staying for a

longer day with additional costs to cover additional child-care or loss of income from an afterschool job. The rate of pay for the elongated formal school day at BRICK was yet to be negotiated, but was likely to be approximately a \$50/ hour flat rate for the extra time.

There were teachers on the faculty who were excellent teachers. They were also very dedicated to the students (almost all the teachers were very dedicated to the students at the school). One group of teachers of special mention was the group of three teachers who taught the third grade. These teachers worked closely together already as a team, even before the BRICK model. The principal at Avon Avenue School prior to BRICK's arrival had allowed them to departmentalize the third grade, and it had worked very well for these teachers and their students. These third grade teachers were less than pleased when the BRICK leadership team "undid" their departmentalized units in their first year and changed them back to contained classrooms. These veteran teachers were helping third graders to excel, especially in math. One discouragement these teachers faced was that they would receive children, most often at least one grade level behind (often more). They helped their students to become proficient and advanced proficient on third grade level math assessments. In the first BRICK year (2010–2011), one of these teachers was the only grade level teacher to teach in the BELL extended day program. The teamwork of this group of teachers and her familiarity with the students' learning needs resulted in the strongest outcomes on assessments by both BELL and the NJ State achievement tests. The achievement data are presented later in this chapter. While this group of teachers self-reported (in interviews) their initial resistance and skepticism about the new, young TFA BRICK team (and also because of the last-minute way the changes were made by the district), they were slowly won over by the BRICK leaders actions that were taken to

support student achievement and to provide appropriate teacher support. They especially cited the support given by vice principal Perpich to the teachers and the students (and their families) to help support maximum and differentiated student learning (interviews with teachers, present study, 2013. See Chapter 12).

In an era of teacher “reform fatigue” and reforms that “blame teachers” for failure of students (especially in high poverty districts), changing the culture of a school is not easy. This was even more the case at BAA, especially given the less than ideal circumstances in the timing and launch of BRICK’s first year at Avon Ave.

BRICK’s philosophy is built upon teachers as leaders to change the instructional culture of a school. While BRICK added two teachers to the BAA faculty (Williams and Scott), and Mindy Weidman as the Technology Coordinator, the faculty at BAA was otherwise virtually the same in 2010–2011 as in 2009–2010 (year preceding and first BRICK implementation year). Most of the teachers were tenured and many had spent their entire careers at Avon Avenue School. So, how did a group of fairly novice teachers influence these veterans to help make the cultural change that was in evidence by the end of the school year?

In addition to the confidence, urgency, aggressiveness and boldness of the BRICK team, they also stated and modeled “patience” and “humility.” They led by example. They stated and practiced their belief in the power of teachers to initiate and support change to better support student achievement. They expressed their belief in students’ abilities to achieve and be great every day. They selected teachers to be Grade-Level Leaders (GLL) in Grades K–5, and to act as conveners and facilitators of meetings to share student data, plan, and collaborate. The GLL’s served as ambassadors to the

Vertical team meetings to establish coherence and transparency in goals, benchmarks and teaching vocabulary across the grades in writing, literacy, and math. For the upper grade teachers (6–8), BRICK organized departmental leaders by subject: language arts and literacy, math, science, and humanities (Zha et al., 2012).

Individualized Professional Development

In the BRICK model, teachers were expected and supported to be continually learning to improve the effectiveness of their teaching practice in order to support student learning and mastery. Professional development in this first year included:

- orientation and training about the BRICK model of teacher–driven and student–centered practices
- training in new curricula, such as the STEP program, READ 180, and other district and school curricula

With all the changes and new curricula that were introduced during the first year, professional development was not individualized, and remained largely a stated goal and value.

Student–Centered Learning and Student Engagement

Teachers completed an Individual BRICK Plan for each student, outlining the learning levels and learning goals for each student in each subject, especially for math and reading. The individualized BRICK Plans were developed and shared with each student and parent. Each student’s BRICK Plan served as a roadmap and guide for the year. Teachers were expected to differentiate teaching to meet each child/student “where they were,” and to give opportunities for “guided choices” and student ownership in the

classroom, as possible. Teachers developed “teams” to allow students to take “time outs” in a different classroom when there might be behavior difficulties or other circumstances in which a “change of venue” might help give the student (and teacher) a chance to “reset” their attitude and behavior. Teachers developed signals and codes for one another to communicate a request for a “time out” for a student. (For example, a teacher might ask a student to take a blue magic marker to another teacher, and this was a request to the other teacher to allow the student messenger to have a brief “time out.”) (Teacher interviews, Knauer, Spring 2013).

Having identified high expectations and goals, the BRICK leadership team sought to establish traditions to celebrate success along the way. In the first year of implementation, the BAA leaders and teachers created many traditions to celebrate student success. Some of the kinds of celebrations were a pizza parties for students who received all A’s and B’s on a report card cycle; recognition and celebration for most improved students (teacher’s nomination); a party for students achieving new STEP levels (celebrated after each assessment); celebrations or award ceremonies for perfect attendance (certificates and special activity); a “students of the month” board (student’s picture and description posted outside classroom and by the main entrance); and the creation of BRICK BUCKS and a BRICK Store. Teachers and staff could give BRICK BUCKS to students each day for positive behavior and achievements (e.g., homework completion, a good grade, a kind act, etc). Students saved their BRICK BUCKS for use every two weeks in the BRICK store (set up in the Parents room and run by the Parent Coordinator with parent volunteers). Students could shop with BRICK BUCKS to reward themselves with school supplies, books, candy and more. There were also special events

that were developed by staff, especially for upper grade students, which could be attended by redeeming BRICK Bucks (a dance, a special holiday event, a movie and popcorn, etc.). Some of the positive student incentives developed in the first year of implementation were formalized in the following year's staff handbook, and will be described in more detail in findings about Years 2, 3 and 4 implementation (Chapters 9, and 13).

Many hours were spent by BRICK Avon Academy (BAA) teams developing both the very detailed discipline policy (including lists of infractions and consequences for teacher-given, or all school detention; parent meetings; and and/or suspension, to name a few; as well as outlining and emphasizing rewards systems and plans for reinforcing and celebrating positive behavior). All of these components of student discipline policy were implemented in the first year (2010–11), but also reviewed, refined and detailed extensively by various BAA teams over the first year and summer for full all-school implementation in Year 2 (2011–12). Furthermore, developing the application for the School Improvement Grant (SIG) as a school community during this same period (November, 2010–March, 2011) allowed more school-wide systematized planning and support for these policies; and the grant provided financial support for array of events during the second year of implementation at BRICK Avon.

As a part of a district-wide initiative in the Newark Public Schools (NPS), elementary schools across the district adopted school uniform policies for 2010–11. The BRICK model mandated school uniforms but due to the short time frame for implementation in the first year, BAA strongly encouraged students (and their parents) to wear school uniforms in the first year. Students and parents in the lower grades were

more compliant; students in upper grades were less so. The school uniform policy was fully mandated at BAA for the second year of implementation, as a part of the school's student discipline policy and expectations for student responsibility and accountability.

Student investment (developing student agency in learning) and student choice, especially for the older and middle school students, was an area that was not developed much in the first year of implementation. These goals were stated in the BRICK model but were deferred as a goal for upcoming years. Extra-curricular activities for students such as chorus, basketball, double-dutch, dance and flag football were important and fit into BRICK's model for student choice. However, BRICK added rules that students must meet academic requirements (attendance, passing grades) in order to participate. This rule kept a number of students from participating and their absence made it more difficult for BAA's teams to win local and national competitions. However, these new requirements did signal a change about the seriousness with which BRICK held students responsible and accountable for their own academic performance. When students were denied participation in extracurricular and sports activities due to their poor attendance or grades, a message was sent to the entire BAA community about a change in approach. Additionally, in order to broaden student choice, teachers actually taught various topics in one choice period a week. Students could chose from activities that included chess club, quilting, modern dance, and more, which were taught by the BRICK Avon faculty.

Parent Partnerships

Building stronger partnerships with parents for student achievement and well-being was a major goal of BRICK. Putting systems in place to build stronger communication and outreach with parents was a major goal of BRICK. This was

evidenced in their door-to-door outreach to students' homes prior to the opening of the new school year, and the "back to school" barbeque held to kick off the inaugural year of BRICK Avon Academy. Parent attendance at school open-houses and workshops in the first year (AY2010–2011) became a benchmark for measuring parent attendance in future years. In March of this first year, the principal invited parents to dialogue together around the topic of how to increase parental engagement at BRICK Avon Academy.

Increasing Parental Engagement

Concern about low levels of parent engagement led Instructional Leader, Principal Haygood, to rename what was considered the parent teacher organization to Parents with Powerful Voices (PPV). To her, in other communities, the PTA or PTO might be what works, but at BRICK Avon her desire was to build a partnership with parents and help them to make their voices powerful. The agenda for the first meeting of the PPV, which took place in early March, 2011, was to have a conversation about what it means to be a partner versus a participant and to create the beginnings of a communication chain. In attendance were ten parents, all of whom were women; five staff members, including Mrs. Haygood; and seven students. In a little over an hour, nearly everyone in the teachers' lounge had contributed to the conversation, and clear next steps were determined. Overall, there was agreement between the staff and parents as to some of the root causes of the academic failure of the students. The deepest concern was the feeling that the school had a poor sense of community; it should operate like a family, like a village. This led to a discussion of how what was happening inside the school was simply a reflection of how families in the surrounding community were operating. Many felt that too many parents were not making choices that put the child's

best interest at the forefront. One parent responded strongly to this, stating that it was the shame of the parents for not doing what is necessary for their children and that the school should not do everything for the parents. In essence, she was asking where the line was drawn between the responsibility of the school and the responsibility of the home. The wrap-up of the meeting did not bring any of the attendees closer to resolutions for these issues, but Mrs. Haygood was able to set a precedent for what parents involved with PPV were expected to do. Two specific actions include volunteering to come in and help students practice very specific assignments, such as using flash cards to practice their letter sounds, and volunteering to be a homeroom leader who would communicate with the other parents of students in the class when needed (Zha et al., 2012).

Another story of an action taken by BRICK leaders came from listening to a parent's concern about her daughter's near suicide due to bullying at BAA. The parent described the response from BAA leaders, who took direct action to address bullying at the school. They developed a retreat for bullies and leaders implemented in the second year 2011–12 at BAA.

Beyond–School Structure: Providing a Community Neighborhood School

As stated above, BRICK Avon Academy was a neighborhood school located in the South Ward of Newark. This is a purposeful decision and part of the school model. Any school managed by BRICK was supposed to remain a neighborhood school. The founders of BRICK envisioned implementing the model at several South Ward schools that fed into Malcolm X. Shabazz High School. This is the high school where two of the founders began their teaching careers. It was vital to the founders that ALL children have access to a quality education, and that quality options be located in some of the most

distressed neighborhoods of the city and serve first the children who reside there. As BRICK founder Dominique Lee described it, access to high quality education for children in poor distressed neighborhoods at a neighborhood school was THE new issue in U.S. civil rights (see Chapter 1).

Community Partnerships

Many of several key partnerships at BAA were developed during the first year, for further development and implementation in subsequent years. One BRICK partnership with the *Center for Collaborative Change* and the *Living Cities Initiative* included a focus on access to health care for BRICK Avon students. In this partnership, BRICK families would be able to access primary and dental care from the Jewish Renaissance Health Center mobile van right at the school on a weekly basis, as well as to have behavioral counseling services. This resource was scheduled to begin in fall 2011 (Year 2). *The Center for Collaborative Change* had developed a city-wide initiative to map out challenges and resources in distressed neighborhoods, and to incrementally increase the well-being of residents of the city in these neighborhoods. (While BRICK's model was centered on school transformation, BRICK founders believed and espoused strengthening neighborhood health and economic conditions as an important support for turning around schools like BAA in distressed neighborhoods. See Chapter 14: Update—What's Been Done 2015–2020.)

Another BRICK partnership formed and implemented in the first year of BAA was with a group of volunteers from Bernardsville that provided a Saturday tutoring program at the school. This program was launched in February 2011. A teacher from Bernardsville volunteered to bring adults and high school students to BAA to help tutor

students. Principal Haygood opened the school each Saturday and provided a breakfast snack to BAA students, siblings, and neighborhood children. BAA teachers provided materials for the tutors to use with the students. It was hoped that the program's success and popularity with helping students would support its continuation into subsequent years.

In addition to a number of partnerships which BRICK leaders developed, the NPS district also had many ongoing partnerships which schools, including BAA, and NPS teachers were able to access. These included educational programs and partnerships with institutions such as the Newark Museum, the NJ Historical Society, Liberty Science Center, the Audubon Society, and more.

BRICK Student Promotion

One quite controversial decision by the BRICK leadership team involved grade level promotions and retentions. Throughout the year, the BRICK teachers were asked to give honest feedback to parents about achievement goals and the levels of their child(ren). At parent-teacher conferences at the ending of each "report card" grading period, teachers met with parents (those parents who attended) and shared a personalized "BRICK plan" for each child. The BRICK plan would explain where a child stood in reference to the expectation of progress and grade level, along with three (3) specific activities that parents could do at home to help their child with that progress to help close the gap and to avoid retention.

At the end of the 2010–11 year, the BRICK team decided that any student who was too far behind in grade level *would not be promoted to the next grade*, but would repeat the same grade again. This was consistent with implementation of their alignment

with Mastery Learning Theory (Bloom, 1971), in which students do not move on to new challenges until they have mastered foundational skills and knowledge on which new learning will be built. BAA leaders recommended that almost one in four students repeat their grade level in 2011–12. For parents that had come to parent–teacher meetings during the year, this may not have been a surprise, but it was tough. It was also controversial for many controversial, nonetheless. Many parents were not happy with this decision. Teachers also had mixed reactions to this decision. Research about retention is very mixed, with adverse outcomes of emotional and psychological harm, negative stigma; and benefits may be negated over the long–term, especially for older children (Jimeson, S.R., 2001). The only students not affected by the BRICK retention were eighth graders. BRICK leaders did not hold back any 8th grader from moving on to high school.

For obvious reasons, many parents of older students who were to be retained at the end of AY 2010–11 chose to seek other school options, not BAA, for the next 2011–12 school year. BRICK’s grade retention action was controversial, but it matched the BRICK talk of action. It also raised the sense of urgency about the failure of achievement at the school. If a child was to succeed academically, he or she would need to be close to or on grade level, especially in reading. BRICK did not view it as a favor to just keep passing a child along from grade to grade while the child was falling further and further behind.

The retention of so many students at the end of BRICK’s first year was a tough action that sent a strong message to BAA parents and students about the urgency and seriousness of BRICK’s academic rigor and achievement goals. Certainly, there was

concern about making certain that resources were put into place for the second year to support students who had been retained with appropriate intervention services. Some students were referred for assessment for special needs by the Child Study team. At the end of the first year of implementation, BAA administrators chose to give retention notices to 24% of the students attending BRICK (136 students of 560 total students).

Table 7.2 below gives a breakout of the number of students retained in their grade level at the end of the 2010–2011 school year.

Table 7.2

Student Retention Data Year 1 (AY 2010–11)

BAA Grade	Enrollment AY 2010–11		Students Retained in same grade at end of AY 2010–11	Students retained in same grade at end of 2010–11 who returned to attend BAA in AY 2011–2012
K	60	60	11	10
1		59	16	15
2		48	16	14
3		56	16	12
4		58	16	13
5		49	12	9
6		79	24	15
7		65	25	13
8		87	0	NA

Note. Source: BRICK Avon Academy administrative records.

The retention of 24% of the students at the end of the first year of implementation sent out a strong message that the new management was not willing to pass along failing students from grade to grade. The new expectation was that students were capable and

would need to be on grade level at the end of each academic year. Everyone would have to work harder to do right by BRICK Avon students.

Findings: Teacher Survey Year 1—BAA (Zha et al., 2012)

Teacher surveys were conducted in at BRICK Avon in the winter of 2011 (Zha et al., 2012). The survey items were constructed from the Chicago Public Schools Teacher Survey and Schools and Staffing Survey with additional items tailored to the specific BRICK Avon Academy context. The teacher survey measures self-reported teacher attitudes and perception as well as classroom teaching practices. The 30 teachers surveyed were 56% African American (N=16), 25% white (N=8), and 22% Asian, Hispanic or other N=6). The highest level of education reported by teachers was 59% BA/BS (N=18) and 41% with a MA/MS degree (N=12).

Changing climate, expectations and accountability to create a professional learning community at any school, including BRICK Avon Academy (BAA) is a process that cannot occur in one year. Nonetheless, results from a teacher survey taken in the second half of the first year of implementation (Zha et al., 2012) indicated that teachers believed that the BRICK Avon Academy was an effective workplace. Most of the teachers had strong positive feeling about this new BRICK model (see Appendix B, Survey Results B1). In their survey responses, teachers indicated that they are supported to determine appropriate assessments and the most effective method of instruction to ensure student mastery. They agreed that “teachers work hard to help their students succeed” 97% (N=29); and 100% agreed that “teachers really care about their students at BRICK Avon Academy.” Most teachers (93%) agreed that teachers share and discuss student work with other teachers,” and 90% agreed that “teachers review overall trends

in students' data (e.g., absences, ontrack rates; grades test scores)." There was also 85% agreement that "teachers spend a lot of time discussion student data to plan changes to the instruction or plan interventions." The majority of teachers indicated that while it is still a work in progress "the BRICK model seeks to provide differentiated professional development to better support teachers in helping them meet student academic and learning needs and targets"; that "BRICK Avon Academy is using professional development as a problem solving tool;" and, that "BRICK seeks to provide teachers with the knowledge and skills that they need to effectively teach students" (Zha et al., 2012). The same can also be said for improving the quality of the school's leadership, regardless of whether this is strategic or instructional leadership. Therefore, as well as job-embedded professional development for teachers, teachers indicated that "BRICK seeks to provide professional development to meet the needs of the leadership team (Zha et al., 2012)." Teachers' responses were in agreement with questions about working together with other teachers, supporting students to learn, and professional development. Responses indicated that 90% of teachers felt that professional development at BRICK Avon had "been sustained and coherently focused, rather than short-term and unrelated." (See Appendix B, Survey Results B1)

The survey also indicated teachers believed that "during BRICK implementation, teachers commit to establish instructional plans and collect both formative and summative assessment data and adjust future planning, including personal professional development (Zha et al., 2012)." (Note: survey and survey questions modeled upon surveys by Bryk et al. (2010) at the Chicago Consortium for Improving Schools, University of Chicago.)

In the 2010–11 teacher survey, 29% of teachers indicated that they held leadership positions at BRICK (Zha et al., 2012). This survey and the teacher responses indicate that teachers were aware of the BRICK model and that the majority of teachers were positive about initial changes that teachers were central to implementing in the first year.

There was less agreement to issues surrounding consistency of curricula, student discipline, and parental support for teachers. Responses indicated that 35% of teachers *disagreed* that “there is consistency in curriculum, instruction and learning materials among teachers in the same grade level at this school” and 66% of teachers *agreed* that “many special programs come and go at this school.” Teachers’ response indicated that only 23% agreed that “teachers feel good about parents’ support for their work.”

Teacher responsibility for student behavior also received mixed responses. Only 44% agreed that teachers “help maintain discipline in the entire school, not just in their classroom.” Responses showed 67% of teachers felt “responsible for helping students develop self-control,” and only 46% of responses indicated that teachers felt “responsible when students failed.” (See Appendix B).

The teacher survey indicated that teachers believed BRICK Avon Academy could be and was developing into an effective professional learning community. Almost all teachers agreed that “teachers collaborate to discuss student work and review data about it.” There was more mixed agreement (only about half of the teachers) by teachers who thought that other teachers were willing to try new ideas and take risks or accept responsibility for student failure (Appendix B). About a third of the teachers stated that there was insufficient coordination and consistency between the curriculum and the

instructional materials and instruction (Appendix B); however, given the amount of time and effort spent on acknowledging problems in curriculum alignment, perhaps this is a very honest response. However, most teachers responded that the school was on the right track and that they had been included in planning and opportunities to work with their colleagues.

Against very daunting odds that the BRICK leaders faced at the beginning of the year, the survey, interviews and observations all indicate that BRICK leaders created a healthy relationship with their teaching colleagues overall, and that BAA teachers felt positive about their colleagues and about working with them at BAA, despite a year of great change (Zha et al., 2012). While one year alone is not enough to base an evaluation of change and outcomes, these changes as observed and as reported by BAA leaders and teachers alike were changes in a very positive direction.

Findings: Parent Survey AY 2010–2011

Parents' Views of the BRICK Model in the First Year of Implementation

The independent research team (Zha et al., 2012) conducted a parent survey at the February 2011 parent–teacher conferences (1pm–7pm) and recruited 102 parent respondents (for 760 student enrollment). From conversations with various stakeholders at the school, researchers were told that one parent or guardian may represent anywhere from 1 and 5 children attending the school. By a conservative estimation that each parent represents 2 students attending BAA, and 760 students is divided by $2 = 320$, then the sample of 102 parents may have represented between 25%–30% of school parents and family units. The parent survey items were constructed by the researchers (Zha et al.,

2012) using a validated survey model (Bryk et al., 2010) with special attention to parent understanding of key BRICK model components.

Parents self-reported on racial identity and income level (see Appendix B, Survey Results B2). Of the 102 responses, 90% were African American, 5% Hispanic, and 5% white, Native American, or other. Parents reported about their income: 57% had an annual income under \$20,000; and 22% had an income of \$20–30,000. This reflects the general extreme poverty of families whose children attend BRICK Avon. Parents indicated their highest level of education as: 3% had only elementary or middle school 8% had some high school; and 42% were high school graduates (or G.E.D.). Twenty-five percent had some college: 9% had completed an associates degree; 3 % had a college degree; and 2% had a graduate degree.

Approximately 90% of the parents surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that BRICK Avon Academy was a great model of NPS for the community; and 92% agreed or strongly agreed that BAA was moving in the right direction. Approximately 80% of the parents indicated that the overall quality of BAA was excellent or good. Seventy-two percent of the parents rated the school building and facilities as excellent or good. Approximately 80% of the parents believed that safety and security of the school were either good or excellent. This is notable since school safety was a top priority for most parents, and especially for families in crime-ridden neighborhoods. More than 90% of the parents who completed the survey believed that the community should be willing to sacrifice or compromise to accomplish the vision of BRICK (Appendix B).

Some challenges or concerns that emerged from parent responses to the survey were that 81% of parents reported that they were not engaged in any school activities.

There was evidence from observation, surveys and interviews by the independent research team that neither parents nor staff fully understood the effort that would be needed in successfully reforming BRICK Avon. They did not seem to fully understand the urgency for increased accountability for student outcomes as perceived by the BRICK team (Zha et al., 2012) .

In addition to the observations of specific parent and community engagement, the survey results coupled with the community demographics cited above demonstrate that many BRICK Avon Academy neighborhood families suffer from various hardships. The positive side was that teachers and staff at BRICK Avon were willing to work hard to build trusting relationships with parents and community members. In addition, more than ninety percent of the parents who completed the survey believed that the community should be willing to sacrifice or compromise to accomplish the vision of BRICK (Zha et al., 2012).

Student Transiency

An additional and substantial challenge for this school and the BRICK founders was student mobility and transiency. The NJ DOE School Report Card for the 2009–2010 academic year reports general mobility rates at the former Avon School as approximately 30% for that year. This meant that approximately one third (1/3) of the student body moved in or out of the school over the course of the school year. This put a tremendous burden on classroom teachers and the entire school to continually accommodate new students throughout the school year. It was difficult for teachers to lose so many students and their families with whom they had worked to establish a relationship and academic progress.

Student Achievement Outcomes for Year 1 (AY 2010–11)

Before the BRICK model was implemented in the 2010–2011 academic year, Avon Avenue School was in Year 7 of school improvement status under No Child Left Behind (<http://www.nj.gov/education/title1/accountability/ayp/0910/profiles/>).

Table 7.3

2010–2011 NJASK Performance for BRICK Avon Academy (% proficient or above)

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Math</u>			<u>LAL</u>			<u>Science</u>		
	<u>Year 1 2010– 2011</u>	<u>Pre- BAA 2009– 2010</u>	<u>1yr +/-</u>	<u>Year 1 2010– 2011</u>	<u>Pre- BAA 2009– 2010</u>	<u>1yr +/-</u>	<u>Year 1 2010– 2011</u>	<u>Pre- BAA 2009 – 2010</u>	<u>1yr +/-</u>
<u>3rd</u>	<u>56%</u>	<u>38%</u>	<u>+18%</u>	<u>35%</u>	<u>15%</u>	<u>+20%</u>			
<u>4th</u>	<u>47%</u>	<u>24%</u>	<u>+23%</u>	<u>17%</u>	<u>11%</u>	<u>+6%</u>	<u>73%</u>	<u>58%</u>	<u>+15%</u>
<u>5th</u>	<u>34%</u>	<u>22%</u>	<u>+12%</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>0</u>			
<u>6th</u>	<u>21%</u>	<u>18%</u>	<u>+3%</u>	<u>17%</u>	<u>17%</u>	<u>0</u>			
<u>7th</u>	<u>12%</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>+8%</u>	<u>11%</u>	<u>15%</u>	<u>-4%</u>			
<u>8th</u>	<u>17%</u>	<u>9%</u>	<u>+8%</u>	<u>32%</u>	<u>23%</u>	<u>+9%</u>	<u>30%</u>	<u>30%</u>	<u>0</u>

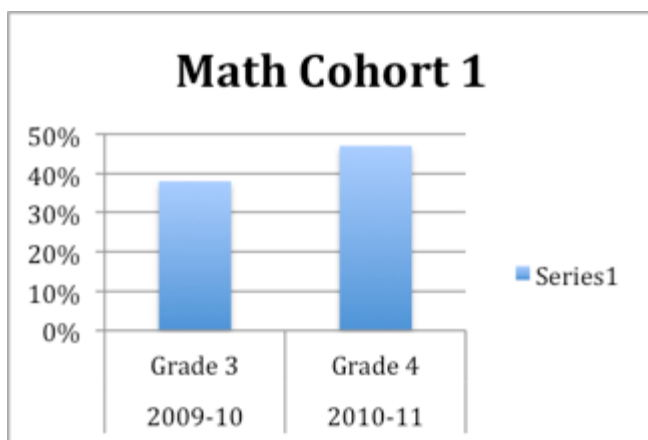
Third grade state test results show that from the previous end of year to the end of the first BRICK year, math scores increased by 47% (from 38% to a total of 56% proficient or above). Language arts and literacy increased 20% (35% proficient or above). 4th grade math scores increased 23% (to 47% proficient) from the prior year; and on science a 15% increase to 73% proficient. Other grades showed increases in student proficiency, but from very low initial scores and not as much increase. For example, even though only 4% of 7th graders scored “proficient” in math before BRICK, the percentage who scored “proficient” at the end of BRICK’s first year was 12%, tripling the numbers

who scored proficient. Nevertheless, student achievement scores on NJ ASK went mostly in the right direction after the first year of implementation of the BRICK model.

Looking at the NJ ASK results across cohort groups of students by grade from one year to the next, we can follow the BAA third grades in AY 2009–10 to the end of BAA’s first year. In math scores, 3rd graders went from scoring 38% proficiency in math pre–BRICK to scoring 47% proficient in math as 4th graders in AY 2010–11 (Figure 7.1). Third grade scores went from 15% proficient in literacy rising slightly to 17% as 4th graders the following year. Moving to those students who were 4th graders pre–BRICK, there is not much increase across years in literacy. Math scores, however, rise with the 4th grade student students from 24% pre–BRICK to 34% proficient as BAA 5th graders the following year (Figure 7.2). Cohort #3 (Figure 7.3) shows the increase in math proficiency from NJ ASK scores for 7th graders pre–BRICK to 8th grade at the end of BRICK Year 1. This same Cohort #3 also increased their language arts proficiency from pre–BRICK to end of Year 1 (Figure 7.4) Data from surveys and observations conducted during this first BRICK year indicate that there was evidence that teachers, students and parents had begun to understand that a transformation model is underway, even if they did not fully understand or embrace and internalize the model as their own. The beginnings of a shift in culture and practice were observed at the school by the end of the first year of implementation.

Figure 7.1

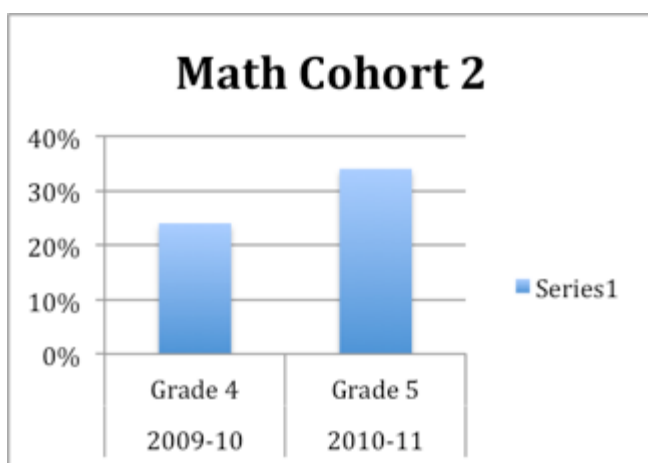
Math Cohort #1 Increase in Proficiency on NJ ASK Scores from Pre-BRICK to End of Year 1



Note. Source: NJ DOE School Report Card

Figure 7.2

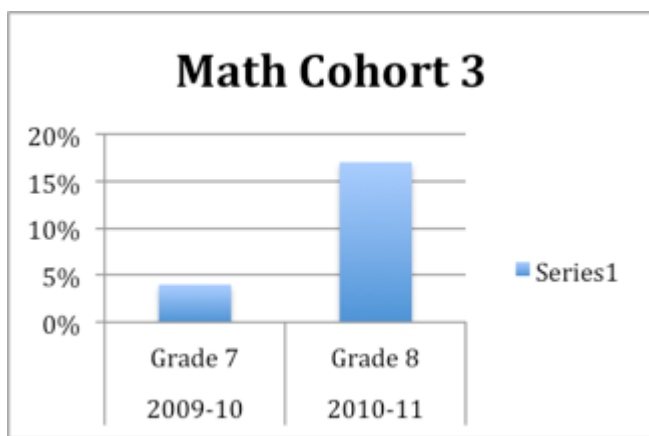
Math Cohort #2 Increase in Proficiency on NJ ASK Scores from Pre-BRICK to End of Year 1



Note. Source: NJ DOE School Report Card

Figure 7.3

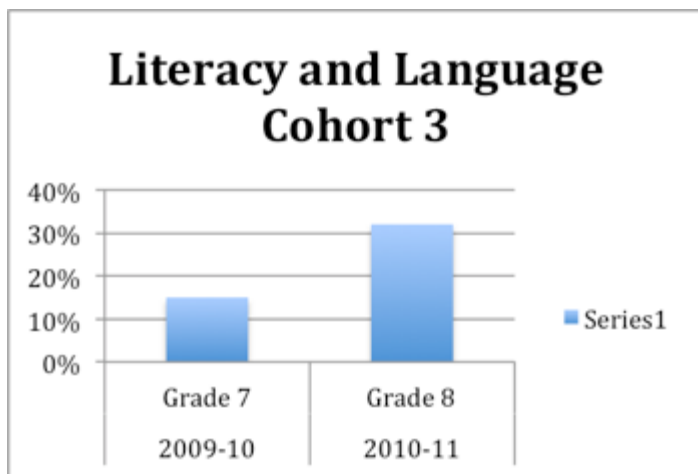
Math Cohort #3 Increase in Proficiency on NJ ASK Scores from Pre-BRICK to End of Year 1



Note. Source: NJ DOE School Report Card

Figure 7.4

Language Arts Cohort #3 Increase in Proficiency on NJ ASK Scores from Pre-BRICK to End of Year 1



Note. Source: NJ DOE School Report Card

STEP Literacy Assessment implementation

In the 2010–2011 academic years, the school had implemented the Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress (STEP) program for Grades K–3. As described by University of Chicago:

STEP defines the pathway and tracks the progress of pre–kindergarten through third grade students as they learn to read using research–based milestones. STEP enables educators to implement a developmental approach to teaching reading, using evidence to inform instruction, and introducing targeted interventions based on that evidence. (Kamil et al., (2008)

The 2010–2011 benchmark data for Grades K–3 revealed that many of the BRICK Avon students had severe deficits in reading comprehension (2011 BRICK Avon School Improvement Application). STEP provided the school with a robust literacy assessment program that helped professionally develop teachers, and assessed students. The STEP program provided an instructional structure for early literacy. Based on the STEP stages, kindergarten students who were on track in their literacy development moved through a pre–reading assessment and Steps 1–2, first graders moved through Steps 2–6, second graders move through Steps 6–9, and third graders moved through Steps 10–12. The learning and skills are sequential and scaffolded. Within this framework, the STEP curriculum helped teachers better understand detailed reading skills needs and acquisition. The STEP program “steps” also set visible goals and benchmarks for students and parents. STEP progress was posted in the classroom, and students were excited to see and celebrate movement from one STEP to the next throughout the school year. Teachers and administrators engaged students and parents in achieving the STEP goals, and created multiple ways to celebrate student achievement towards these goals.

The STEP curriculum and approach was employed by BRICK as a major strategy in their foundation and research–based goal for ensuring children would read on grade

level by the end of Grade 3; and in order that students would then be able to effectively use reading to learn in subsequent years. Research shows that failure to achieve this goal is correlated to school failure, to high school graduation failure, and to the school to prison pipeline (Kamil et al., 2008).

As stated earlier, the STEP program was quite intensive and required the commitment of teachers to learn to implement the program. It required that teachers continually review and reflect on student data in order to differentiate teaching for each student's learning needs. The one-on-one assessments were performed by the teacher three to four times per year, required a quiet space and at least 30–45 minutes with each individual student. This meant that each benchmarking assessment might take a teacher several days to complete individual assessments for 18–24 students. It also required support from administrators to provide for classroom substitute coverage for the teacher during the assessments.

According to the STEP report card, 50% of BRICK Avon Academy kindergarteners were at step 0 at the beginning of 2010–2011 academic year (BRICK reports). This meant that these students were not meeting targets across such areas as number and color recognition, phonemic awareness, letter–sound correspondence, match word, and use of understanding strategies. This low level (a score of 0 or below) was of grave concern, especially in a district like Newark that offered free pre–school and pre–K education to all 3– and 4–year olds. Proficiency in most of these skills (number and color recognition, etc.) were normally standard for 3 year olds, especially for those children in an early childhood education setting. This fact (STEP 0 performance) raised other questions for the leaders of BRICK, as it should have for district leaders as well. These

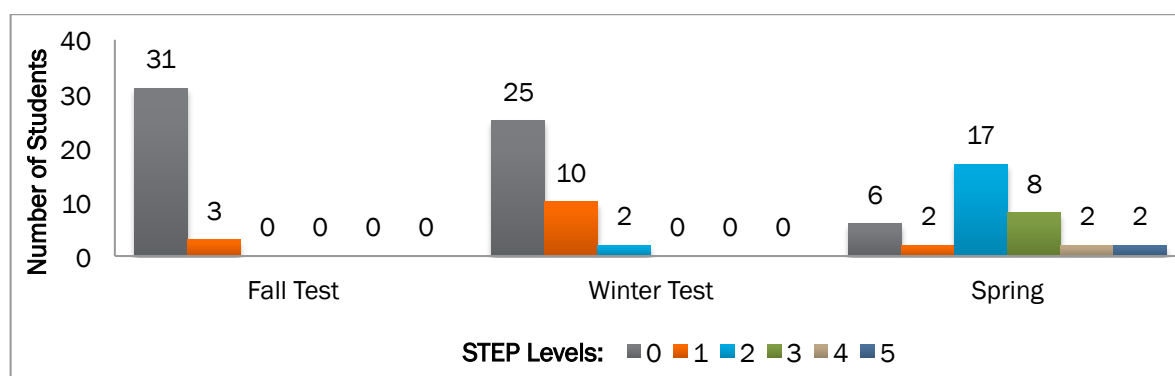
assessment results raised broader questions for the BRICK team: were these students not attending Newark's certified free pre-school and pre-K programs? Perhaps the early childhood programs were failing to provide basic pre-literacy mastery for children who attended their programs? Or, both? BRICK administrators found that it was BOTH: some children did not attend the certified early childhood programs that were provided free of charge for all Newark 3- and 4-year olds. Additionally, some of the certified early childhood centers were not adequately preparing children attending their centers with the education to adequately prepare these children for kindergarten.

STEP First Year Outcomes Showed Large Needs and Marked Improvement

As shown in Figure 7.5, kindergarten students' performances on STEP showed substantial improvement during the BRICK Avon's first academic year. This progress in the initial year of implementation was a huge success and tribute to the teachers, the BRICK team, students and parents—the entire BRICK Avon learning community. Use of the STEP assessment for reading, supported teachers in new understanding and strategies for teaching differentiated reading comprehension, and allowed a common approach to measuring children's critical progress in reading comprehension skills.

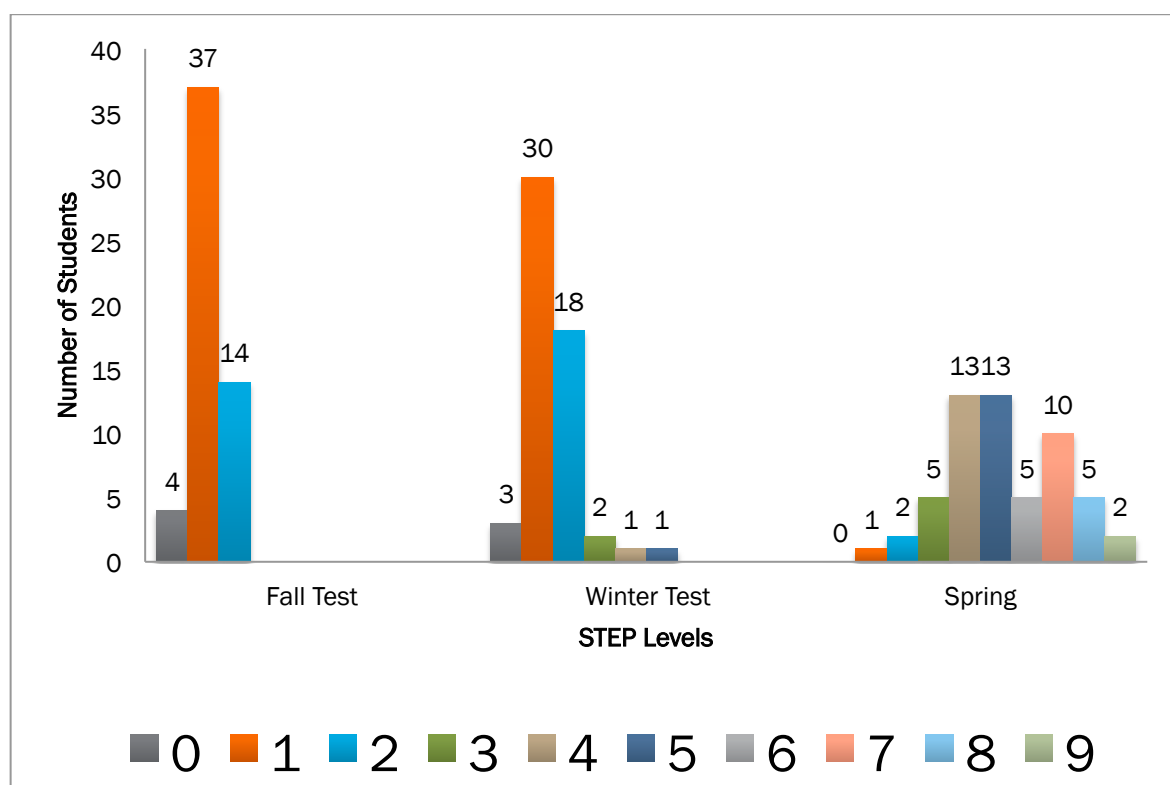
Figure 7.5

BRICK Avon Academy Kindergarten STEP Assessment Results Year 1 (AY 2010–11)



Note. Source: BRICK administrators from student assessments by grade level teachers (Zha et al., 2012).

In the second grade, all students were assessed at kindergarten literacy level at the beginning of the academic year (STEPS 0–2) (See Figure 7.6). In the winter test, only 3% of them had improved to first grade literacy level; the other students were still remaining at the kindergarten literacy level (Figure 7.6). Fortunately, there were dramatic improvements during the spring 2011 test: 31% of students increased to second grade literacy level, 57% of them increased to the first grade literacy level, and only 15% of them were still remaining at kindergarten level (Figure 7.6).

Figure 7.6*Second Grade STEP Assessment Results Year 1 (AY 2010–11)*

Note. Source: BRICK administrators from student assessments by grade level teachers.

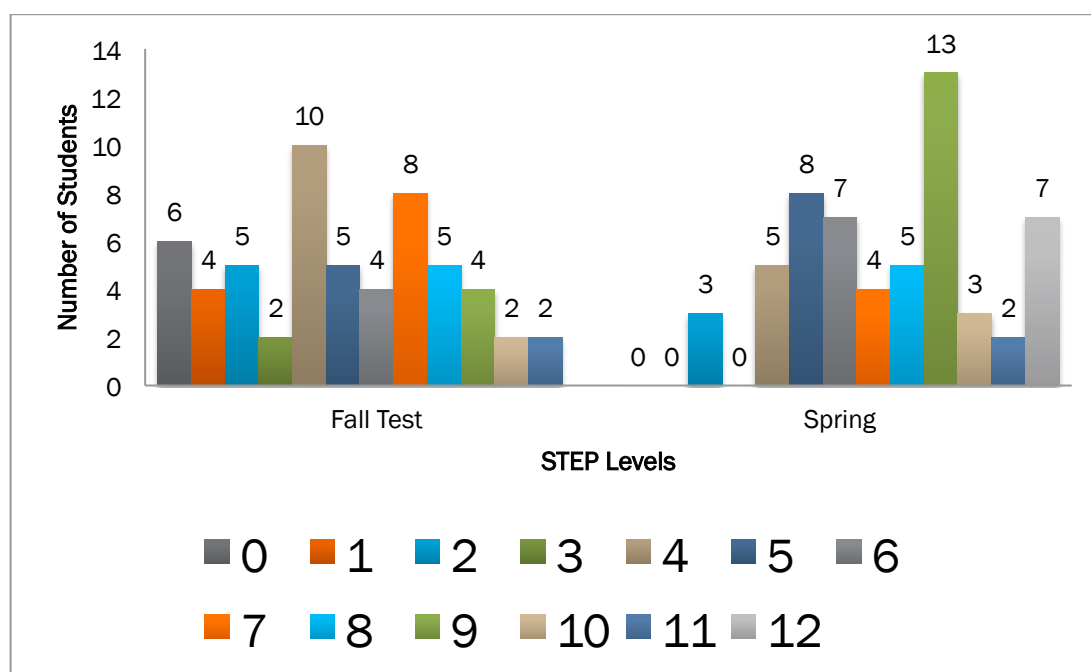
Implementation of this intensive, data-driven STEP curriculum and process for student literacy allowed teachers, school leaders, children and parents to track student mastery against grade level goals in this critical core area. A third of the students gained over two grade levels in this first year. Nearly another two thirds of the students demonstrated increased literacy mastery of over one grade level. In addition to continuing to assess possible strategies to support students who did not progress notably in their literacy mastery, the entire school instructional team was challenged to find ways to continue to facilitate student literacy mastery in order to assure that students were on

grade level and had full and advanced literacy mastery by the end of the third grade. This goal was based upon research that shows this would give these students the strongest opportunity for long-term academic success. BRICK's full implementation of this new STEP data-driven curriculum and collaborative instructional process demonstrated the power and possibilities (as well as the challenges) for BRICK's new way of empowering teachers and students.

According to the STEP assessment results for the third grade at the beginning of the first academic year (Figure 7.7), over one third of students were assessed at kindergarten literacy levels. The majority of the third grade students remained at first and second grade literacy levels. As shown in Figure 7.7, only 7% of students met the third grade literacy level. In the spring administration of the STEP assessment by teachers, students' performance improved dramatically. Of all the third graders, 22% of these students were now assessed at a second grade literacy level, and only three of the students remained at the kindergarten literacy level. However, the majority (76%) of the third grade students still scored at first and second grade literacy levels.

Figure 7.7

BRICK Avon Academy Grade 3 STEP Assessment Results Year 1 (AY 2010–2011)



Note. Source: BRICK administrators from student assessments by grade level teachers.

Note: There were no first grade results; and there were no winter test results for 3rd grade (only fall and spring) for AY 2010–11. Second and third grades showed strong progress from the fall to the spring test results, especially since the 2nd grade test results were so low in the fall. 100% of the second graders were assessed at kindergarten literacy levels in the fall assessment. Kindergarten students also showed progress from the fall to spring, with only 34 children represented in the fall and 37 in the spring.

Training in using the STEP assessments helped teachers individualize and differentiate their instruction and better understand details of which specific comprehension skills each student needed to master.

Budget and Resources

Findings: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (Zha et al., 2012).

The MOU set out parameters and authority of the two entities—BRICK and Newark Public Schools (NPS) and was finally signed in March 2011. The MOU allowed BRICK “the maximum freedom and autonomy permissible by law ... in order to best serve the students and communities of NPS and to develop new best practices that can be implemented in other areas of NPS.” The MOU gave the school more autonomy with the budget (than other district schools) within the law. The BRICK Avon Academy budget for this first year was based on a per pupil spending (up to 800 student capacity). The budget for next year and subsequent years would be negotiated (A budget for BRICK had been developed in concert with NPS and was submitted in March of this year for next year). With agreement and support of NPS, BRICK the non-profit Educational Management Organization (EMO) was allowed to raise philanthropic funds for the benefit of BRICK school. NPS would also act, when requested, as a fiscal conduit for BRICK grants, as it did for other NPS schools. The MOU gave BRICK full authority to create and implement professional development and training ... and also to have the option to utilize all training services offered by NPS and participate in collaborative training, but not required to do so. The NPS also agreed to pay (MOU) for the implementation International Baccalaureate implementation, including professional development of staff, travel cost, implementation and authorization fees. The MOU allowed BRICK the flexibility to develop a school staffing plan that addressed the need of BRICK Avon Academy, and not tied to the traditional “floor plan” or staffing pattern at other NPS schools. Some of the way this flexibility was seen at BAA in the first year (2010–11) was the division of leadership roles via the addition of the School Operations

Manager (SOM); and the addition of a Mandarin language teacher for Grade K–5 (February–June, 2011).

BRICK Avon School Budget

The NPS district provided BRICK Avon Academy (per the MOU) with administrative services of the district, including human resources; financial resources; maintenance and operations of facilities; capital repairs and improvements; security and emergency; transportation; and student meals and snacks; (food for this first year, with an option given to BRICK’s autonomy to select a separate food service provider starting in the following year.)

Table 7.4

BRICK Avon Academy Public School Budget General Fund

BAA School Budget	AY 2010–11
General Other Funds	\$5,057,103
Student pop	635

Note. Divided by 635 = \$7,964/student; Source: NPS website
<https://www.nps.k12.nj.us/departments/sba/finance/budget/2016–2017/>

The general fund budget for each traditional public school was based upon a per pupil attendance count. The State of NJ funded a large percentage of the Newark Public Schools budget, with a percentage of that coming through the State Department of

Education to the NPS District from the federal government (e.g., Title I funds). The city and the County (Essex) fund a small percentage of the NPS budget.

Newark (NPS) receives roughly \$19–20,000 per pupil. BRICK Avon Academy, along with other public schools, received direct funding for approximately \$7500 per student per year (based on student count on a specific day). Additionally, BAA received services (legal, human resources, custodial, etc) from the NPS district. BRICK Avon Avenue School received \$5,057,103 total general fund in 2010–11. Table 7.4 shows the amount in the school’s budget for AY 2010–11. The majority of those funds went toward salaries. For example, approximately \$2,330,000 of this amount were teachers’ salaries at BAA. This does not include supervisory and other support staff salaries. The salaries at the school were roughly 80–90% of the school’s budget. The school budget line for general supplies showed approximately \$102,000 per year. The SIG funds were dispersed according to the SIG budget (approved by Federal, to State, to local oversight). These additional SIG grant funds allowed the school to renovate the facility and integrate technology. SIG funding allowed for other targeted expenditures not available in the annual budget. The private funds raised by BRICK allowed the school to access funds for special supplies and purchases not covered in the budget. (Note: charter schools in Newark receive between \$13–14,000 per Newark student enrollment count per year from NPS, but do not generally receive facilities funding.)

In the first year of implementation, Mr. Lee raised approximately \$250,000 from private philanthropy to supplement the NPS BRICK Avon Academy budget. This private, outside financial support provided: the salary of the School Operations Manager, with the benefits paid by NPS (it would be picked up by the NPS budget in the following

year); funding for the STEP literacy curriculum program; funding for salaries for summer staff for preparation of the building; funding for teacher training; funds for purchase of a discipline ID tracker; for science programs, and math intervention books; for a phonics program; for conferences; for the BRICK logo, printing and T-shirts; for the community survey; for a stipend for the executive director; and for various BRICK supplies and BAA school supplies. Mr. Lee stated his hopes to raise \$700,000 from private sources during the following year (AY 2011–12) in order to provide additional instructional supports.

Events and Political Environment in the NPS District During the First (AY 2010–2011) Year of BRICK Avon Academy

In late October, 2010, residents in Newark and across the country were taken by surprise when Governor Christie and Newark Mayor Cory Booker appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show and made an announcement with the founder and CEO of FaceBook, Mark Zuckerberg, that his foundation would award \$100 million to the city of Newark for school reform efforts. The funds were conditional upon Booker raising a matching \$100 million, so \$200 million was to come to Newark for school reform. This created new and mounting pressure and community fears about the selection and appointment of a new state-appointed superintendent for NPS. What would the reform plan be, and what say would the residents and families of Newark have in the plan?

At the State level, in December 2010, the Governor announced the appointment of Christopher Cerf to become the new NJ Commissioner of Education. Cerf was the founder and CEO of Global Advisors consulting firm. The announcement caused an outcry from Newark residents, since Mr. Cerf's firm had conducted a series of school facilities "audits" that formed the basis for recommendations for the closure of over a dozen neighborhood schools, mostly due to dropping enrollments and inefficient use of

space. Newark residents saw Christie's appointment of Cerf as a conflict of interest, since his company benefited financially from the Newark Public Schools and he would now be placed in charge of the state's control of the Newark school system at the state level. Cerf became the new NJ Commissioner of Education, and worked with Cory Booker to help pitch the transformation of the Newark public schools to private investors who might help contribute toward the \$100 million match as required for Zuckerberg's gift (Russakoff, 2015, p. 98–100).

Key to the ability of the mayor and the Governor to turn a mostly failing school district around to become a model for outstanding achievement was strong leadership at the NPS district-level. Another key was the negotiation of a new contract with the local teacher's union, that would create a new teacher evaluation system. Such a system would include sanctions for a teacher's failure to support satisfactory student progress, and extra rewards for supporting outstanding student outcomes—a controversial model more in line with big business than with schools. With months going by and no announcement being made about appointing a new NPS superintendent, Mark Zuckerberg and his Foundation director were quite concerned. They called a meeting with Mayor Booker to express their concern and ask for action. Booker reassured them of his commitment and promise for imminent action (Russakoff, 2015, pp. 66–67).

Announcement of a new NPS state-appointed school superintendent: On May 4, 2011, an Advisory Board of well-respected members joined with Chris Christie and Cory Booker in a public meeting at Science Park HS to announce the selection and appointment of Cami Anderson as the new state-appointed superintendent of Newark Public Schools (Russakoff, 2015, p.109–110). Earlier in the process, a top choice African

American candidate was lost because of delays, so Anderson was the unanimous new choice. The 39 year-old woman was the first non-African American, white superintendent in Newark since 1973. Her background in education was impressive, but definitely with a “reform” twist. She had begun her career teaching with Teach For America, held a MA in education from Harvard; then joined TFA’s New York executive team for five years. She helped to run New Leaders for New Schools (founder Jon Schnur became an architect of Obama’s Race to the Top), whose mission was to train principals as agents of reform. She had been a senior strategist for Booker’s 2002 (failed) mayoral campaign. She had served most recently as a superintendent of alternative public high schools in NYC under Joel Klein. Although her race was a contentious factor in a predominately black and latino district/city, Anderson had grown up with nine adoptive siblings—all of color; and her domestic partner, Jared Robinson, with whom she had a young 14-month son, was African American (Russakoff, 2015).

Anderson’s affiliation with Teach For America and her “reform” mind-set, was welcome news to the BRICK leaders who hoped that she would be sympathetic and supportive of their philosophy and plan. They were encouraged by her May remarks to the community in Newark where she said that “Every single child, regardless of circumstances, should have a skill they can attain to make the choice they want, whether career or college (Russakoff, 2015, p.107–109).” Her stated strategy to put excellent teachers and excellent leaders in every school and classroom(Ibid, p. 100) certainly sounded similar to the BRICK approach. She proceeded to hire 17 new principals over the summer and within three years replaced over half of the seventy NPS principals who had been there when she came. She claimed that this was a strategy to vest school reform

responsibility in the hands of principals. She also created a unified Talent Match data program where principals could post school teacher and staff openings for their schools, especially for displaced NPS teachers. There were already many displaced / unassigned NPS tenured teachers, due to school closings and falling NPS enrollment, and as charter school enrollment rose (Ibid, 110). BRICK leaders had cause to be optimistic about the new NPS superintendent's alliance with their goals and model.

Summary of Findings About the First Year of Implementation at BAA

The first-year study of BRICK Avon Academy by independent researchers, including the author of this dissertation, (Zha et al., 2012) provided an initial benchmarking of the 2010–2011 year of implementing the BRICK model in a school (BRICK Avon Academy–BAA) managed by BRICK and operated by the Newark Public Schools (NPS) District. Interviews, focus groups and surveys with faculty and with parents indicated that a shared knowledge and vision for the school was indeed in the process of developing at BAA during this initial year (Zha et al., 2012). There were still misunderstandings about the model and several components of the model had yet to be implemented. The leadership team shared with the researchers that they realized that many staff and parents did not understand that this school was in the process of being turned around, and did not seem to sense the urgency for increased accountability that goes along with this process. The leadership team reported that there was a lot of initial confusion and misperception within the community and the faculty at the beginning of the year. Many people were angry and confrontational at first because they had heard this was now a charter school, being run by newcomers.

In addition to the observations of specific parent and community engagement, first year survey results coupled with the community demographics cited above demonstrate that many BRICK Avon Academy neighborhood families suffer from various hardships. Many of the students come to school having witnessed events that silently traumatize them and break apart their families. There was much healing that needed to take place in the community surrounding BRICK Avon Academy. The positive side was that teachers and staff at BRICK Avon were willing to work hard to build trusting relationships with parents and community members. In addition, more than ninety percent of the parents who completed the survey believed that the community should be willing to sacrifice or compromise to accomplish the vision of BRICK (Zha et al., 2012).

The dramatic increase in the students' literacy levels at the end of Year 1—as measured on for different grades both the STEP assessments and on the Grades 3–5 NJASK state test—speaks to the dedication and abilities of this group of teachers at BAA (including those who chose to leave after the first year), and the BRICK leaders (especially the Principal Haygood as Instructional leader; Ms. Williams as a model K teacher; BRICK Vice Principal Perpich for K–5; and the ELA and math coaches). That this group was able to learn, implement and develop a collaborative teaching and learning community so effectively in such a relatively brief period of time is of huge import. It is to the BAA leadership's credit that they were able to remain humble, supportive, and to believe in and support the teachers through this intense process. It did not begin on a smooth footing. Yet, despite so many obstacles, there were notable and measurable gains in the first year of implementation of the BAA turnaround. It was by no means

satisfactory or conclusive of success, given the challenge of the gap in student achievement, needs, and lack of overall grade proficiency. Nonetheless, it is notable that teachers, staff and parents perceived a positive direction in all of the key areas: Leadership, pedagogy and curriculum, teacher development and support, student-centered teaching, school culture, parent engagement and community partnerships, and resources and budget as documented in first year surveys and interviews by the independent research team (Zha et al., 2012).

The BRICK Avon administrator's decision to retain 24% of the students (K–7) in their same grades for the following year, sent a message to everyone that the work to be done was serious and urgent. BRICK was not willing to let students “slip through the cracks” without adequate, targeted skills.

In March, BRICK Avon Academy completed an interactive planning process and submitted a grant application through the district to the U.S. Department of Education for a School Improvement Grant for the following three years. (The other Newark public schools in the SIG grant proposal submission were all high schools.)

Additionally, the first year of implementation of the BRICK model at BRICK Avon Academy was a year set into a larger context of change and political distrust.

Newark schools and the politics surrounding education were thrust into the national spotlight with the announcement (on the Oprah Winfrey Show) in October, 2010 of the \$100 million matching grant to the city of Newark (and specifically via Mayor Corey Booker) for education reform from Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg. New Jersey Governor Christie appointed a new state Commissioner of Education amidst

controversy, followed by the selection and appointment of a new state-appointed superintendent of Newark Public Schools in June of 2011.

As the BRICK administrative team prepared for their second year of leadership at the school, they were hopeful that the new Newark Schools leader's background in Teach For America would help in building a working relationship.

Chapter 8

What was Done in Year 2 (2011–2012)

Introduction

Chapter 8 reviews some of the change that took place in the second year of implementing the BRICK model at BRICK Avon Academy (BAA). The first year was a rollercoaster year, often “running to catch up,” planning and implementing at the same time. This was especially true because the BRICK founders had planned and designed an early elementary school, but were assigned to a school with a large middle school population as well.

This chapter begins with a review of BRICK’s application through the Newark district for a federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) that was completed in April of the first year. The application process allowed BRICK to include input from all BAA stakeholders in planning the next four years. It gave teachers, staff, parents and community members voice and a sense of ownership in a shared vision for BRICK Avon’s future. The contents of this chapter are drawn primarily from documents and archives to lay the foundation for what was done at BRICK Avon prior to the year of the present study in years three and four.

Setting the Stage for Change—BAA School Improvement Grant (SIG) Application

In February and March of 2011 (Year 1), there were a series of meetings with the BRICK learning community (teachers, administrators, and staff; parents and community), supported by the NPS district, in preparation and submission of a School Improvement Grant (SIG) application from BRICK Avon Academy through the NPS district to NJ DOE.

Contributions by teachers, parents, students and school leaders led to inclusion in the grant application for a number of items and programs that would be supported by the 3-year SIG grant beginning in BRICK's second year of implementation. Many (if not most) of the plans proposed were already outlined in BRICK's original plan and proposal for BAA. (The district had prepared an application for NPS schools the previous year, and had wanted to include BRICK but had to wait a year to do so.)

The announcement of the Federal SIG grant award to NPS and BRICK Avon Academy was for a million dollars a year for three years, beginning in the fall of 2011–12 school year. This was a huge boost to the BAA learning community and allowed them the ability to implement more of the BRICK model for school turnaround and improvement.

One of the intended major components of the BRICK plan (and for school reform efforts across the nation) included increasing the number of hours in the school day. Increasing hours in the formal school day would allow teachers more time to teach, and students more learning time in school. More hours would support time for teacher collaboration and for professional development. While charter schools could more easily structure longer days and more school days as a part of their teacher contracts (mostly non-union and at-will teachers), NPS schools (including BRICK Avon Academy) were governed by NTA Union contracts and NJ State Board of Education rules. BRICK had to get NTA's support in order to use the SIG grant for longer hours; and to address their priority of increased teacher–student contact, instructional time, and professional development.

According to the SIG application proposal, BRICK would extend the learning time for both teachers and students by:

- extending the school day every school day by 60 minutes (except for June) = total of 160 hrs;
- creating a three week summer teacher institute = 90 hrs;
- providing each child with at least two extended learning opportunities during the academic year through “Saturday excursions” = 12 hrs; and
- providing one extended day per month (*3 hours per month=27 hours*) for professional development for staff members. (School Improvement Grant Application, Project Abstract, April 2011)

Asking teachers to extend their working day by teaching an additional hour every school day was no small request. Additionally, there was a 90-hour Summer Institute mandated as well. Teachers who had young children themselves might have additional childcare arrangements and costs to consider. Even arranging childcare for the three week summer institute was a personal and financial burden for many teachers. Additionally, many teachers worked additional hours as tutors in the summer or in afterschool hours for additional income (up to \$75 per hour) and this meant loss of budgeted income for them.

BRICK proposed paying all BAA teachers at a flat rate of \$50.00 per hour for the additional extended school hours in the 2011–12 school year. As BAA leaders worked to shape the faculty for year two of the implementation, this required additional time caused some teachers whom BRICK leaders may have wished to encourage to change schools, to

make that change. However, BRICK also lost teachers who they had hoped could stay on as a part of the BAA team.

Adding additional staff members to support BRICK's learning goals was also prominent in the BRICK plan and the SIG application. Specifically, the application included adding a Behavioral Specialist staff member to the BRICK leadership team by adding a "dean of discipline and community." Many of the teachers and the BRICK leadership team were challenged by the severe emotional needs of at least a few children at every grade level, and especially in the middle school level. The hope was that a Behavioral Specialist would provide a resource for student well-being, as well as providing a support to teachers and students who were distracted from academic focus by students with more severe behavioral and emotional needs. Additional reading and math coaches to supplement and support teachers, and Intervention Specialists to help students in closing BAA's students' severe academic "gaps," were also part of the SIG application and plan. The additions of these professional support staff were seen by BRICK leaders as critical for student and teacher support and increased positive outcomes; they would also to help get BRICK to be a world class IB school by 2014.

Funding for classroom computers, white boards, and overall technology hardware and software and installation was a major expense covered in BRICK's SIG grant. This was a one-time major investment to wire and equip a 100-year old building and give capacity to integrate technology for teaching and learning. The grant would also be used to support a data-system for tracking student progress and keeping the entire BAA learning community (as well as the NPS district) on the same page for individualized student intervention and learning plans. Funding for more student activities and

programs (music, arts, physical and mental well-being) was also a prominent part of the SIG grant. Additional primary intervention and support would be funded for students who were more challenged by academic gaps (“Tier 2” and “Tier 3” students). All of these extra resources and support for student-centered learning may have been another reason that BAA retained so many students in their same grade at the end of the first year. The administrators were working diligently to insure that there would be new strategies and intervention resources to insure that these students would not just get a repeat of what they had already experienced. Instead, there would be more resources to help students move ahead with their literacy skills.

Sharpening and redefining teacher evaluations was also a part of the SIG application (as required and in line with the BRICK plan). Putting this plan in place would be a three-year, teacher participatory process. BRICK’s SIG proposal cited using a map similar to the *Teaching As Leadership (TAL) Framework*. It was hoped that this approach would help to ensure that coaches (instructional leaders) would provide concrete strategies to teachers about how to refine and improve all aspects of their practice. It would also be used in teacher evaluation reviews. This also mirrored the process for evaluation being developed and followed by NPS. BRICK’s SIG grant application, submitted in April 2011, stated (in reference to changes being implemented for the 2011–12 year):

“As a SIG school, BRICK Avon Academy was treated differently than other Newark public schools in the following ways: With regard to staffing, teachers who cannot meet extended hours must request transfers and the transfers are honored.” As a

result, more than 50% of the school's teaching staff has changed from the 2010–11 year to the 2011–12 year.

Year 2 (2011–12) Implementation

With a year under their belts, the BRICK team worked tirelessly, and took time for reflection and planning. The *BRICK Avon Academy Staff Handbook (2011–12)* details much of the Year 2 plan as shared with the faculty and staff at the three week teacher's institute in August of 2011. Much of the handbook was developed by teams of BAA teachers and staff members, and this distributive leadership reflects the BRICK model.

In many ways, this second (AY 2011–12) academic year represented the full-blown re-launch of the BRICK implementation at BAA. The first (2010–11) year had many last minute, unplanned challenges. For the second year, the BAA staff were fully vetted, with a nearly 50% change in teachers from the first year. BRICK's mission, as stated on its website and in the *BRICK Avon Academy Staff Handbook (2011–12)*, was to: “Build Responsible, Intelligent and Creative Kids. Through a globally minded curriculum, extended day program, individualized professional development, and community and family partnerships, BRICK provides students with the opportunity to be college and life ready in an interconnected global society.”

The BRICK leadership team had a year under their belts and, with more financial support from the SIG grant, they were ready to fully implement the BRICK model at BAA in 2011–12. With the SIG grant award, the time for teaching and learning was significantly increased (per the BRICK plan) by over 200 hours. Besides changes in faculty and staff, there were more financial resources for Year 2 to support the plan.

Faculty joined together in August, 2011 for a three week training and professional development institute, prior to school opening.

Although the first year had been a year of learning and positive progress, the “table was better set” for the beginning of this second year. Although the language explaining the values might be modified in subsequent years, these BRICK values remain the core of the model.

Leadership and Decision-Making

Principal Haygood remained as the new instructional leader for BAA in this second year of school turnaround, having demonstrated to NPS that she had the necessary characteristics to be a transformation leader. Since her appointment, the principal had demonstrated that she was an “innovative leader” and a manager of change who valued collaborative leadership and was committed to 21st century learning skills. She had attended the district’s Leadership Academy and had been coached and supported throughout the first year of BRICK.

In her letter to the faculty and parents (NPS and BRICK Avon Academy website), Principal Haygood shared her experience and expertise as a teacher, including her persistence and very high expectations. She would only request action that she felt was in the best interest of students, and she would never request anyone to do anything that she herself was not willing and committed to do. She stated that she would always listen to viable, thoughtful alternative strategies from her colleagues. (She asked that colleagues not grumble or complain to others, but speak directly with her.) In order to increase her stamina and her support, she had started to run long distances. She shared she planned to run in a half marathon in December, and likened teaching to running a marathon in which

persistence and belief was required, even when the road seemed rough and daunting. She asked teachers to join her in this journey.

Dominique Lee remained as BRICK director and director of operations at BRICK Avon Academy. He remained the chief architect and visionary of BRICK, the chief operations liaison with the NPS administration, and the chief author with NPS of the BAA School Improvement Grant application and implementation.

Mindy Weidman had been the “director of data” in BRICK Year 1. In this first role, she had been responsible for disaggregating data and making sure teachers had access to data. In addition, the data coach followed the lead of the instructional leader and provided the data necessary for the instructional cabinet to make effective and timely decisions (SIG application, April 2011, Project Description p. 30). For BRICK Year 2 (AY 2011–12), Weidman took a leave of absence in order to complete an MPA and leadership certification courses at Rutgers Newark and to do an internship for school leadership certification with BELL. As things progressed, she would be called back into service at BAA during the second year for a new administrative leadership role.

Per the BRICK and SIG plan, the team added a behavior specialist funded by the SIG grant. In the 2011–12 year, they called the position the “dean of discipline.” The person recruited for this position, J. Bone, was formerly on the middle school teaching staff and was a long-time veteran teacher at the school. Early in BRICK Year 2, the vice principal of Grades 6–8, Fred Chapman, was offered a principal position at another school by NPS. He decided to leave BRICK Avon Academy for this promotional opportunity. Fortunately, in her new role, Dean Bone was able to help “hold the fort”

with the upper grades until Ms. Weidman returned as vice principal of Grades 6–8 in the second half of BRICK Year 2 (AY 2011–12).

Instructional coaches: Per their plan, BRICK leaders added an additional reading coach and math coach to the school team (two new coaches were added to the existing team). This allowed them to divide their coaching responsibilities (K–5) math and reading—working with teachers and STEP; and (6–8) math and reading coaches. These new positions were supported through the SIG grant. The coaches supported and coached teachers in their subject matters and helped actualize the goal for individualized and differentiated professional development for BAA teachers.

Intervention teachers: In addition to the 2 new coaches for teachers, BRICK leaders added 2 new positions for direct work with students: one in literacy and one in math. These new intervention teachers provided support and intense one-to-one and small group student interventions and supplemental instruction in reading and math. These new teachers especially targeted interventions for students who were well behind in grade level proficiency. Intervention teachers worked in pull out sessions with students who were identified for intervention.

Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS): Under Mr. Perpich’s leadership, the teachers and the child study team worked closely with him to develop a rigorous intervention plan for all K–5 struggling students and students in danger of retention. Students who had targeted interventions and made little progress over a number of months were referred to the child study team for testing (with parental permission and support), to determine whether or not there were any special learning needs (more financial resources that might be available via a diagnostic classification). Intervention

strategies and implementation were key to BRICK's pledge to address all student needs and bring all students to grade level proficiency. The many poverty related challenges for students and their families encouraged BRICK leaders to pursue all means necessary to assist students and families in addressing social needs along with meeting learning and developmental needs. The high volume, severity, and complexity of many of the situations faced by these families and the challenges that they presented to BAA students and teachers cannot be understated. This approach for referral to the child study team also became somewhat contentious between BRICK Avon and the NPS district, as the NPS district did not necessarily encourage widespread testing and classification of students. However, Perpich's systemization of the I&RS process eventually became a model for the district.

The BRICK principal and vice principals acted as instructional coaches for assigned grades. However, staff evaluation was divided among these same three leaders, but not by grade level. Evaluation of teachers was done three times a year, and assignment of evaluations was listed in the staff manual. So, although Principal Haygood was responsible for instructional leadership for K–1 teachers, she was responsible for evaluating a group of teachers that spanned all Grades K–8. The middle school V. P. was responsible for evaluating most of the balance of the middle school teachers. V.P Perpich had evaluation responsibility for the largest group of teachers from Grades K–5, plus the K–3 level reading and math coaches (BRICK 2011–12 Handbook, p. 83).

Teaching and Professional Support Staff—Staffing: Expansion and Changes

In 2010–11, the leadership team departmentalized Grades 6–8, assigning a number of teachers to overlapping grades in their subject area (e.g., 6/7 or 7/8). There

were 12 teachers, 4 each in math and literacy, and 2 each in science and humanities, spread across the three grade levels. In 2011, the BRICK leadership team formalized the departmentalization of Grades 6–8 by assigning teachers one grade level (vs. the overlapping grade levels that they had assigned in 2010–11) and assigning each teacher to one of the four areas in each grade (math, literacy, science and humanities). Therefore, there were the same number of teachers in the middle school grades in this second year of implementation, but a more equal distribution of teachers and of students per subject per grade level.

As will be discussed further in Chapter 9 (Years 3 and 4), a number of teachers did not return to BRICK in Year 2—some by request and others by choice. The longer formal teaching hours in Year 2 was a decisive factor for many teachers' decision seeking a transfer to another district school. Over 50% (7 of 12) of the middle school faculty and 44% of (8 of 18) of the K–5 faculty were new to BRICK Avon Academy in Year 2. Of the new faculty in Year 2, 25% (3) of new teachers were former TFA teachers, and 50% of the new teachers in the lower grades were TFA alumni, now NPS veteran teachers. This gave the BRICK founders a core of teachers with a TFA mindset similar to their own.

Similarly, professional support staff, the math and ELA coaches (2 new and 2 existing positions), were assigned to Grades K–3 and 4–8, in alignment with the curriculum and pedagogy (e.g., STEP for Grades K–3). This meant that the two veteran coaches, who had served as math and ELA /reading coach for the entire school in the first year, now had assignments with specific grades (K–5 vs. K–8). BRICK founder and team member Bernadette Scott was moved to the new upper grades ELA position to continue

her work with READ 180. A new upper grades math coach was hired. These professionals were aligned with the “teacher professional development” goals of the BRICK model, as their main duty was to do hands-on coaching (including lesson demonstration) with and for teachers. Their role was to support and help teachers be their most effective for students. Additionally, two new math and reading intervention positions were created and two new teachers hired. All of these new professional support staff positions were funded through the SIG grant to BAA, supporting the BRICK plan to turnaround the failing academic performance of the students and the school.

The special needs teachers, enrichment teachers (the arts, physical education) and professional support staff for students also remained in place. Of the student support staff, the service social worker and the guidance counselor were already on board (pre-BRICK). The “dean of discipline” was a new SIG-funded position; however, that position was filled with a long-time Avon Avenue veteran middle school teacher. Additionally, the pre-BRICK Child Study Team social worker remained on the faculty.

Teacher Leadership

The new teacher leadership positions launched in the first year of BAA continued in Year 2 (2011–2–12). One teacher on each grade level K–5 served as a Grade Level Leader. In Grades 6–8, a middle school departmental leader served in each grade level for each of four subject areas (literacy, math, science and humanities).

Pedagogy and Curriculum

Literacy Curricula

The Literacy Program at BRICK Avon Academy for Grades K–5 continued to use the STEP assessment program. BRICK used a balanced literacy framework to teach

transdisciplinary units so that students had the opportunity to grow as readers and writers. Except for the *Foundations* phonics programs, no reading programs were scripted at BAA. This means the *Foundations* curriculum was just a matter of following the script in the lesson given to teachers. Otherwise, “all BRICK teachers are expected to use research-based classroom practices.” This is not “scripted,” instead, “teachers utilize the unit plans they create, execute and revise” (BRICK 2011–12 Handbook, p. 120).

BRICK Avon Academy’s Math 2011–12 Curriculum

Grades K–2 teachers adopted *Go Math*, a new program developed to support the Common Core State Standards for Math. A computer enrichment curriculum, *Dream Box*, supplemented *Go Math*, and could be used in the classroom or at home as an additional support and intervention. Grades 3–4 teachers utilized the 2012 Everyday Math curriculum. In Grades 4 and 5, teachers issued the Math Fact Master Assessment once a week and enter each student’s scores into Kickboard data after each assessment. After each cycle, “Fact Masters” and “Super Fact masters” are invited to a celebration (BRICK 2011–12 Handbook, p. 143). “Fact Masters” was another student recognition and incentive program. Grades 6–8 teachers utilized the Ramp-Up Mathematics Program, which is designed to boost the performance of students who are two or more years below grade level...and expanded the standard period from 50 to 90 minutes of instruction (BRICK 2011–12 Handbook, p.134). It also uses a pre-Algebra approach designed to prepare students to complete Algebra I by end of 8th grade. BRICK teachers were expected to utilize technology to supplement and enhance student learning and to engage students in 21st century learning modes (BRICK 2011–12 Handbook, p.135). Progressive writing and math walls in each classroom (posting student work “in

progress” was another way BAA teachers and students visually tracked and displayed weekly progress and work.

In addition to literacy, math, science and social studies curricula, BRICK also ensured that students were engaged in courses in the visual and performing arts, in foreign language, and in physical education.

Instructional Environment: Guidelines for the Classroom

Each class was to create classroom culture goals that were expected to be clearly visible. Pictures of students and student work were to be displayed (and changed at least every 3 weeks); students were expected to be able to articulate the learning goals and their progress towards them (specific grade level descriptions). The BRICK 2011–12 Handbook went on to describe guidelines for Classroom Management, Literacy Center, Math Center, Science Center, Instructional Technology and Unit of Inquiry Center (pp. 154–156).

In addition to academic subjects, BRICK adopted a Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) program with teacher training for implementation in each classroom beginning in 2011–12. The BRICK 2011–12 Handbook outlined the *Responsive Classroom* and *Development Design* requirements for teachers. Grade K–4 teachers had to establish classroom rules and agreements with students, and thought out logical consequences for anticipated behaviors; had interactive modeling for classroom procedures; had a “Take a Break” location clearly labeled in the classroom; had a brief (10–12 minute) “Morning Meeting” each day, and a “Closing Circle” at the end of each day; had a Visual “Hopes and Dreams”; and “Buddy” with another teacher on the same floor for “time out” back-up. Grade 5–8 teachers were directed to have a “Take a Break”

space clearly designated; have a “Tab Out” location clearly labeled for students visiting from other classrooms; have developed and posted agreed upon “Social Norms”; post visual “Goals and Declarations”; and have interactive modeling for classroom procedures (BRICK 2011–12 Handbook, p. 55).

In Year 1 of implementation, BAA partnered with BELL for the extended day afterschool program and for the summer program in 2011. In 2011–12, BAA continued with BELL for the after–school and summer programs.

Teachers and Professional Development

The BRICK 2011–12 Handbook addressed leadership development at BAA:

In order to improve student achievement, BRICK must provide teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to teach the students. The same can also be said for improving the quality of the school’s leadership, regardless of whether this is strategic or instructional leadership. Therefore as well as job–embedded PD for teachers, BRICK will provide PD to meet the needs of the leadership team. Administrators cannot lead schools to make drastic and dramatic gains on their own (p.13).

This policy was seen be in BAA’s promotional practice, and examples will be discussed in Chapters 8–10.

A weekly schedule of grade level and departmental meetings included a description of the important planning and reflection time that had been designed to allow teachers to work as a collaborative team and that could also include related PD:

- K–5 teachers had two 90–minute blocks each week to meet as a grade level team in the collaboration space in the recreation room (unless otherwise designated).

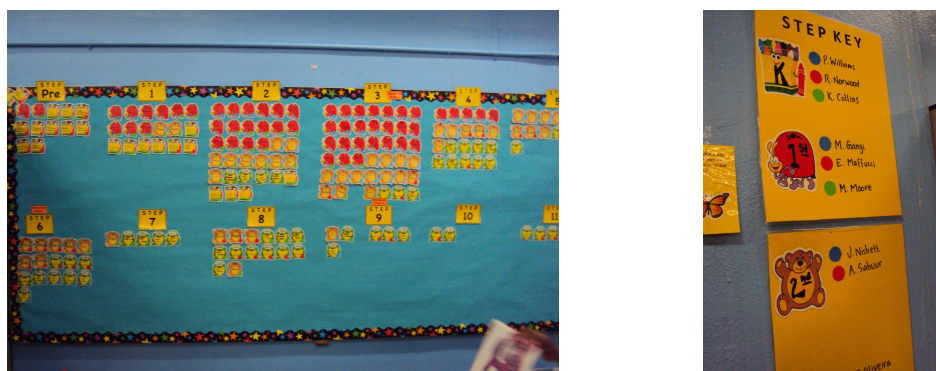
- Grade 6–8 teachers had one 90 minute block each week to meet as a department team, and one 45 minute block to meet as a grade level team (BRICK 2011–12 Handbook, p. 38).
- Grade level leaders were also responsible for meeting vertically (with other grade levels) every other week (one was to focus on math and the other on ELA). “The Vertical Team (GLL’s across grades) meet biweekly to establish transparency and coherence among grade levels; and to act as an ambassador for grade level teachers had three preparation periods per week where they are permitted to determine their own agendas (BRICK 2011–12 Handbook, p. 41).

To facilitate teacher collaboration, the BRICK leadership team created a collaboration space in the back part of the large recreation room in the school ground level. The space was designated as a place for teachers “to meet and discuss their practice. ... Teachers must move out of isolated spaces and into common spaces where ideas can be share and practices supported and challenged (BRICK 2011–12 Handbook, p. 41).” There were four distinct spaces created within this Collaboration Space including: meeting spaces for meetings or individual projects; office space for the math and literacy coaches and teaching resources for teachers; a data wall used to post school-wide assessments and to be a reference for planning; and a space with two copiers, four computers with internet and copiers, a laminating machine, and other office resources for teachers. The importance of this space and the availability of copiers for teachers was very important as a resource for teaching and unusual in public schools. An example of

the data wall would be data in which students were displayed on each current STEP level for reading; or math assessments per grade level (see Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1

Chart of the Data Wall Student STEP Levels in the Collaboration Space, March, 2013



Additionally, teachers could request classroom supplies at the beginning of each month. These requests would be filled within a week if possible. There were also discretionary funds available for limited spending by teachers (approximately \$90/year).

Technology and Blended Learning

Technology and integration of technology into teaching was central in the BRICK model, both in direct and supplemental instruction, student learning, as well as a support in data management and data-driven instruction. A major part of the SIG grant was to bring technology resources into every classroom. Prior to the SIG grant there was very little technology in the classrooms and little internet access or “connectivity” prior to the SIG grant). The installation of technology was handled as quickly and seamlessly as possible, overseen by the director of operations (D. Lee). The infrastructure and wiring of the entire building for technology was installed over the summer. Included in BRICK’s

resources and professional development for teachers was access and use of technology in every classroom, including: an interactive white board, a digital camera, a FLIP camera, an overhead projector, student computers (4–12 per classroom), internet access and a teacher laptop. Additionally, training in new digital curricula such as *Dream Box* supported teachers and students with additional learning resources. The installation of technology into the classrooms was a process over time. It seemed that the lower grades may have received technology integration in their classrooms sooner than some of the upper grades/floors (Interviews in 2013). Some teachers reported receiving training before they had equipment to practice on. This meant that once they received their equipment, they had to request help from other colleagues to understand how to use the equipment and software (Interviews by researcher, March 2013).

Student–Centered Learning: Student Discipline and Behavior

Preparation and implementation of the second year of BAA involved a lot of planning and time devoted to shaping and communicating what acceptable student behavior looked like, and how BAA students were expected to be responsible for behavior that aligned with BRICK values. The BAA leaders contracted with *Responsive Classroom* (lower grades) and *Developmental Design* (middle school grades) to provide extensive training to all classroom teachers and staff in a positive behavioral approach to building a unified positive classroom and safe school culture through systematic activities and approaches (BRICK 2011–12 Handbook p. 108–118).

Much of the first pages of the BRICK 2011–12 Handbook (p. 8–25) were devoted to student discipline policy. This policy was developed by teams of teachers and staff. It should be noted that much of this effort concentrated on making discipline transparent,

very detailed, clearly outlined for all, and fair to all. This section outlined in great detail the consequences of various student conduct infractions. The Code detailed under “Student Code of Conduct” various kinds of Levels I, II, III, and IV student misconduct and the associated action(s) to be taken as a disciplinary action for each kind and level of misconduct; and who should take the action, teachers, administrator, etc. The Code also seemed to speak to the concern that teachers and staff had regarding disruptions and threats to safety that severe and frequent negative student behaviors (albeit by a small number of students) had on the efforts and goals for a safe and positive learning community. In a neighborhood rife with violent incidents, outlining acceptable and unacceptable behaviors and their consequences was of great concern and importance to all within the BRICK Avon Academy community. The behavior management at BRICK Avon outlined everyone’s shared responsibility to consistently enforce the student code of conduct, including lunch and afterschool detention responsibilities. Student safety, the arrival and dismissal locations and staff monitoring responsibilities were outlined in detail.

Social and Emotional Learning (A Positive Approach to Behavior and Discipline)

Later in the same BRICK 2011–12 Handbook (pp.107–118) a significant amount of time and space was devoted to a developmental positive behavior curriculum and the approach that the entire school staff was trained in for the 2011–12 year and beyond. “The *Responsive Classroom Approach* was a way of teaching that emphasizes social, emotional and academic growth in a strong and safe school community (BRICK 2011–12 Handbook (p. 107) from: Northeast Foundation for Children, Inc. at www.responsiveclassroom.org). Training for the approach was contracted by BRICK

Avon. “The goal of the *Responsive Classroom* Approach was to enable optimal student learning (BRICK 2011–12 Handbook, p. 107).” It was developed by classroom teachers and is based on the premise that children learn best when they have both academic and social–emotional skills. The approach consists of classroom and school wide practices for deliberately helping children build academic and social–emotional competencies day in and day out, year in and year out (BRICK 2011–12 Handbook, p. 108).

Teachers and key staff at BAA received in–depth training in strategies to build children’s emotional and social competencies through daily classroom practices. The training and the program helped align school–wide practices and policies to insure that the school “welcomes families and the community as partners” and “organizes the physical environment to set a tone of learning” and helped to ensure that all school activities were planned to build a sense of community. Some of these daily classroom activities included: morning meeting; rule creation; interactive modeling; positive teacher language; academic choice; classroom organization; working with families; and collaborative problem solving, to name a few. The approach was research– and data–based and aligned with BRICK model’s goals to develop a positive, teacher–driven, student–centered learning community that was respectful of all involved.

In partnership with these approaches to student responsibility and accountability, the BRICK 2011–12 Handbook also outlined various school traditions and regular events which celebrate student success in such areas as attendance, academic achievement on report cards, and student classroom and school behavior, which modeled BRICK values of creativity, responsibility, academic achievement, and respect and caring for others. Many of these traditions were launched in the first year’s implementation, but formalized

and expanded during the second year's implementation. Some of the positive student incentives developed in the first year of implementation were formalized in the following year's staff BRICK 2011–12 Handbook. For example, the attendance counselor and the School Leadership Team scheduled celebrations for students who personified these BRICK values:

- Students who achieved perfect attendance for the month would be invited to a special attendance celebration during the first week of the next month.
- Students would receive a certificate showing their commitment to being in school every day.
- Students who received perfect attendance for a cycle would be invited to participate in a special activity and receive a certificate for perfect attendance.
- Students on Super Honor Roll (all A's and B's) would receive a special t-shirt and have their name placed on a bulletin board in the main lobby.
- Student *of the Month*: In recognition and reward to students who exemplified responsibility, creativity and intelligence, each K–8 teacher designated a “Student of the Month.” In their nomination, teachers wrote up a brief description of why the student was selected based upon their embodiment of BRICK's values. Selected students had their picture taken and displayed outside their classroom and in the main hallway.

BRICK Bucks: Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS)

Teachers and all staff could reward students for a variety of positive behaviors that were outlined in the staff manual, and that exemplified BRICK values.

Implementation of this system was expected to result in positive school-wide outcomes, such as quieter halls, less disrespect for teachers, improvement in homework, improved behavior from specific students, and fewer referrals to administration/security. Teachers K–5 got \$75 in BRICK bucks each week to give out at their discretion; and Grade 6–8 teachers received \$100/ week for doing this. Students who received BRICK Bucks could spend them in the BRICK Bucks store (open bi-weekly). K–5 and middle grade students could also use BRICK Bucks to buy tickets to monthly fun BRICK Bucks activities. Monthly activities included: Back to School Dance; movie night/costume parade; game night; pizza party; rollerskating; holiday dance; bowling; NYC field trip; magic show; ice cream social; fun day/field day. Categories of behavior that could be rewarded for Grade 6–8 students included: homework completion (\$1); attendance (\$1/day). citizenship (awarded by dean of discipline—flat \$20/month); and random acts of goodness witnessed by a staff member.

In this second academic year of BRICK implementation, school uniforms were now mandatory to enhance school safety, promote school pride, create a sense of unity amongst students, improve the learning environment, and bridge socioeconomic differences between children; promote good behavior, improve children's self-respect and self-esteem, and produce cost savings for participating families (BRICK 2011–12 Handbook, p. 20).

Yellow shirts and blue pants were mandatory every day, and dress code violations were a “Level I” misconduct infraction, warranting automatic afterschool detention.

All of the BAA curriculum and teaching emphasized differential learning (meeting the student at whatever learning level and skill they were and then working to

bring those levels up to proficiency at grade level or beyond). The curriculum also encouraged offering students choice in unit assignments, even though focused on common learning objectives.

The acquisition of the SIG grant allowed BAA to build in other student learning opportunities, such as in school and weekend educational trips and continued Saturday tutoring.

Student Promotion Policy

In 2011–2012 the BRICK Handbook clearly stated the district policy that “students may be retained only once in any grades first through eighth” (p. 89). Furthermore, specific interventions by the teacher and student support services personnel were implemented for those students who were not making sufficient progress beginning with the first evidence of non–proficiency in any content area.

The policy did not address retention in kindergarten. A number of students were retained more than once in the first four years of BRICK Avon Academy. However, there were never as many students retained as in 2010–11, the first year of the BRICK implementation.

Parent Engagement and Community Partnerships

Introduction

There was much importance given to developing strong communication and positive relationships between the teachers and staff and the parents and guardians of BRICK Avon students. Strong relationships between teachers and parents were expected to result in better student outcomes. *Respect* was central to BAA culture and reflected in surveys, interviews and observations, especially in Year 3 findings.

School Climate and Trust

Communication with Parents

A guideline was given for face-to-face, phone, written and other forms of communication between BAA teachers and parents. Teacher written communication with parents included responsibility for a variety of events including: school activity reminders, assembly program fliers, report cards, workshop notices, lunch forms, warning notices, nurses medical reminders, permission slips, etc. Also, for all-school events such as: first days of school (welcome letter from teacher with BAA packet); *Back to School Night*; quarterly grade level electronic newsletters, featuring units of study and student achievements; biweekly newsletters sent electronically and organized by grade level teachers; and conference/report cards (BRICK 2011–12 Handbook, p. 108–118). It should also be noted that the manual stated, “Occasionally, Grade Team and Department meetings will be devoted to calling parents for positive behavior” (BRICK 2011–12 Handbook, p. 24). Teachers were reminded to call parents with good news about student successes, as well as about problems.

In 2011–12, Vice Principal Perpich began publishing a biweekly calendar called “This Week at BRICK.” The publication outlined what was happening at BRICK Avon, from grade level meetings, to staff development, to student awards, celebrations, BRICK store, assemblies and events. This publication was influential in helping everyone on staff and in the school keep on the same page and schedule, at a glance. It was distributed electronically, but also distributed by hard copy at the front office desk at the beginning of each week. (Note: this newsletter was a great assistance to the researcher in understanding the weekly schedule and planning her research activities in Year 3.) See sample newsletter (Appendix C).

Celebrate Student Achievement, Teachers

BRICK Avon continued and strengthened their traditions of celebrating student achievement, student behaviors which reflected (and reinforced) BRICK values (responsible, creative, intelligent, respectful, kind). Teacher contributions and achievements were also celebrated regularly at grade-level meetings and at monthly faculty/staff meetings (mandatory). Recognition and celebration of student success was important to parents, especially honor ceremonies such as the Blue Carpet annual recognition and awards event.

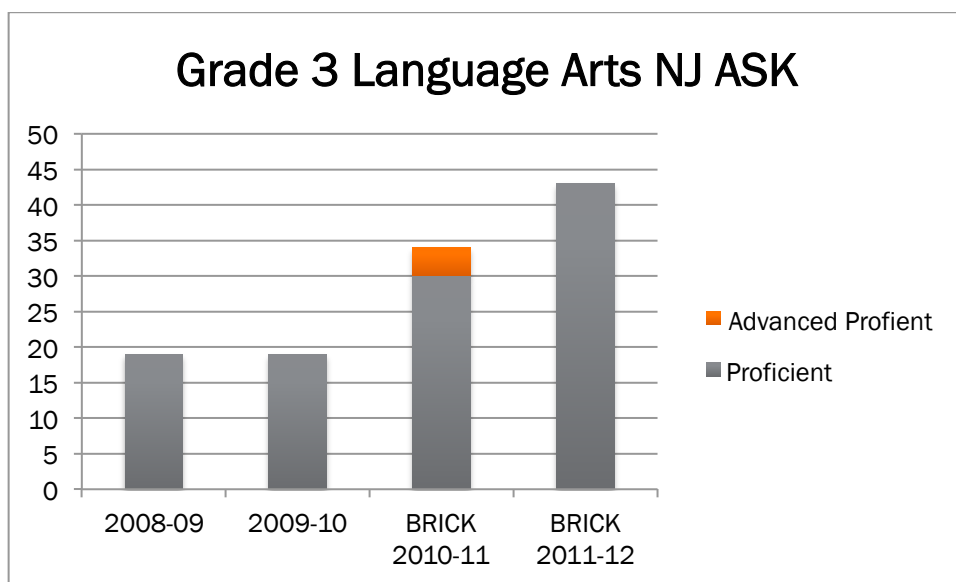
Student Achievement Outcomes for Year 2–AY 2011–12

Introduction

Student academic assessments and standardized test scores were a focal point for the BRICK Avon Academy to judge and be judged about how everything they were doing was measuring up. Increased student achievement proficiency scores on the NJ ASK standardized test from pre-BRICK (AY 2009–10) through BRICK Year 2 (AY 2011–12) showed noticeable improvement in both language arts and math, especially in Grades 3 and 4, and in math in Grades 5 and 6. Third and fourth grade language arts proficiency scores showed steady increases on the NJ ASK in the first two years.

Student Outcomes

The NJ ASK AY 2011–12 student achievement scores in Figures 8.2–8.7 below, show areas of notable gains for Grades 3–6 in literacy and math. Those grades and scores not shown reflect areas of little gain (or loss).

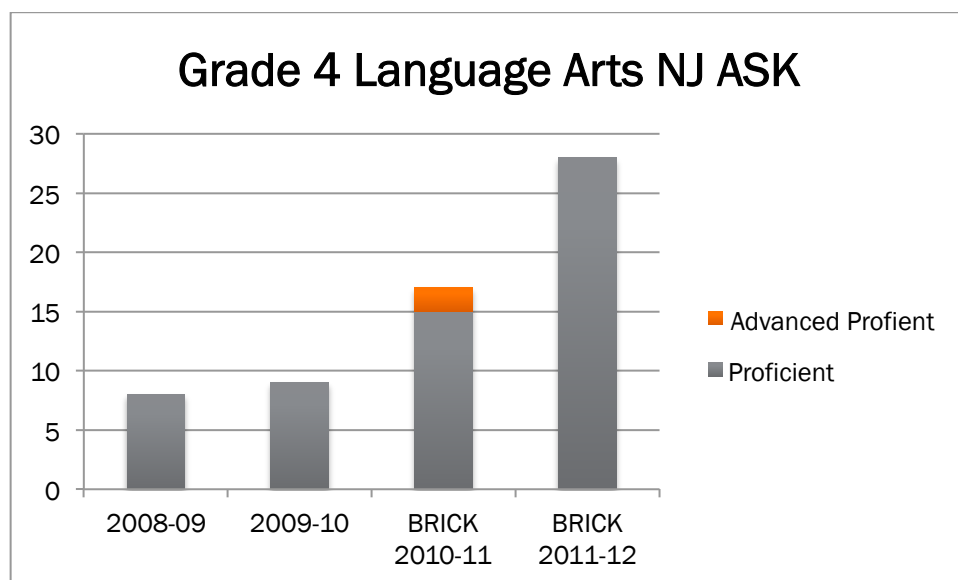
Figure 8.2*NJ ASK Language Arts Grade 3 Results AY 2011–12*

Note. Source: adapted from NJ DOE School Report Card

Figure 8.2 shows progressive gains by 3rd grade students in BRICK Years 1 and 2 on the NJ ASK student achievement scores. Both 3rd and 4th grade scores (Figure 8.3) indicate over 50% increase from pre-BRICK proficiency scores to BRICK Avon proficiency scores in Years 1 and 2 (AY 2011–12).

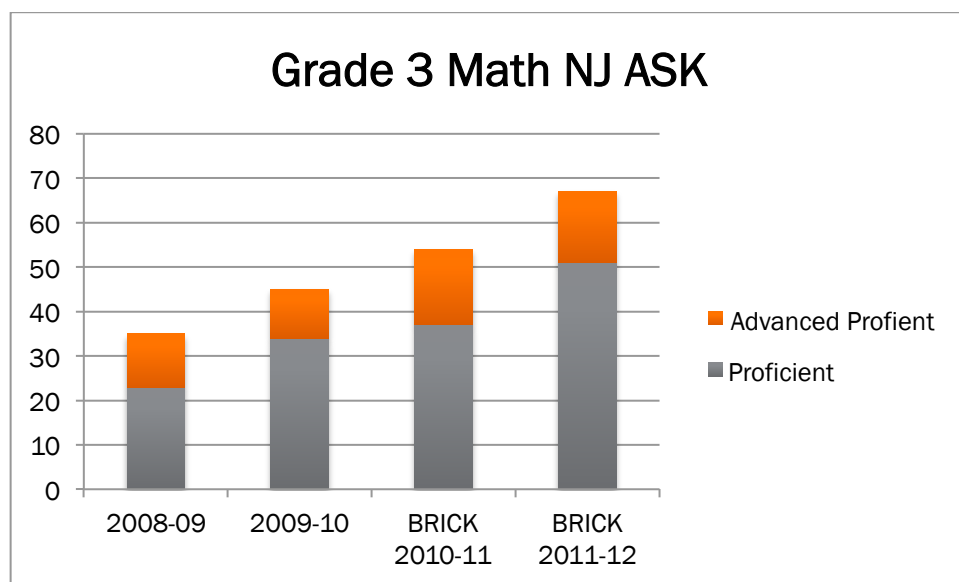
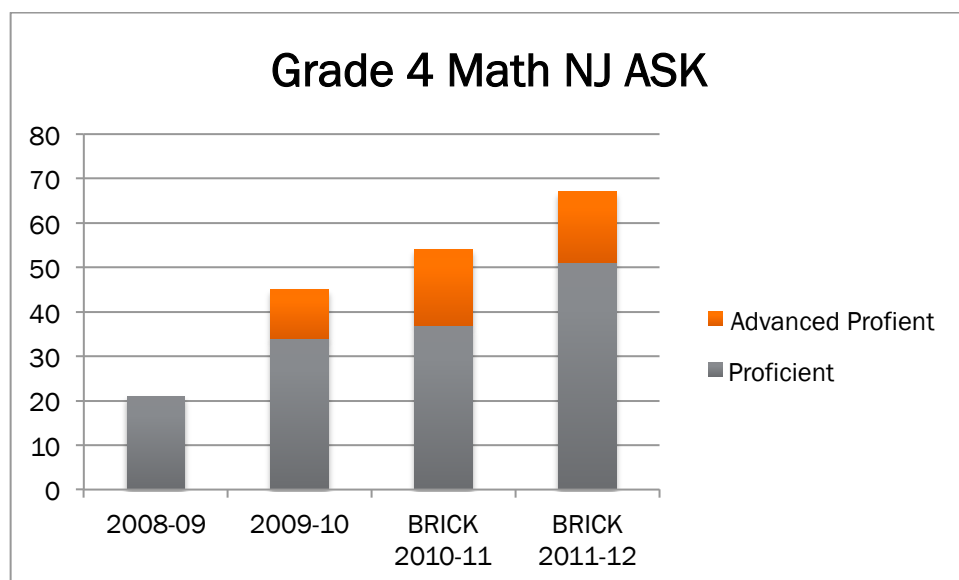
Figure 8.3

NJ ASK Language and Literacy Grade 4 Results AY 2011–12



Note. Source: NJ DOE School Report Card

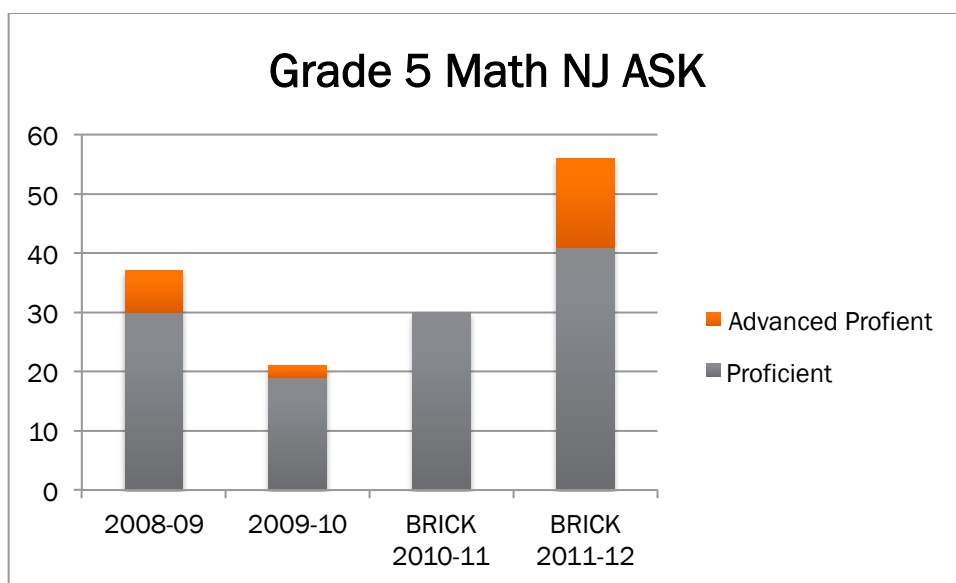
In math, students in Grades 3–6 show progressive gains in NJ ASK scores from pre-BRICK to BRICK Years 1 and 2 (AY 2011–12). See Figures 8.4 through 8.7 below.

Figure 8.4*NJ ASK Math Grade 3 Results AY 2011–12 at BRICK Avon**Note.* Source: NJ DOE School Report Card**Figure 8.5***NJ ASK Math Grade 4 Results AY 2011–12 at BRICK Avon**Note.* Source: NJ DOE School Report Card

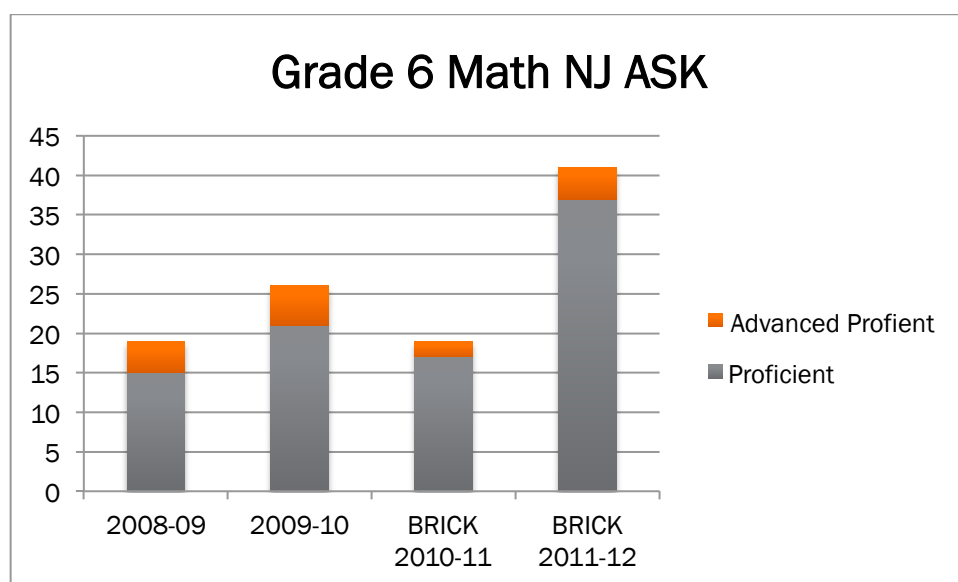
Third and fourth grade math proficiency levels increased by 50% (Figures 8.4 and 8.5). Both fifth and sixth grades also showed notable increases at the end of Year 2 at BRICK Avon (Figures 8.6 and 8.7).

Figure 8.6

NJ ASK Math Grade 5 Results AY 2011–12 at BRICK Avon



Note. Source: NJ DOE School Report Card.

Figure 8.7*NJ ASK Math Grade 6 Results AY 2011–12 at BRICK Avon*

Note. Source: adapted from NJ DOE School Report Card.

Chapter Summary

Year 2 (AY 2011–12) was BRICK’s second “launch” year at BRICK Avon Academy (BAA). The first year of implementation was rushed and last minute, but allowed BRICK to introduce and implement the BRICK plan while the train was already in motion, so to speak. The School Improvement Grant (SIG) planning and submission process in Year 1, sought input from the entire BAA community. Year 2 was supported by significant additional financial support from the School Improvement Grant, which supported several of the “pillars” and values of the BRICK model, bringing them into actual practice. This included the re–configuration of the school to equip it with the infrastructure for technology throughout the building, and equipment for all the classrooms (computer labs, white boards, and curriculum software and data management tools). This process was fairly well executed by the end of Year 2, including training and

professional development for the teachers related to the technology and integrated teaching and learning. Through the SIG grant, additional time (90 minutes) was added to the formal school day. The extension of the school day allowed more time for teachers to meet together for reflection, planning, and PD (professional development), but also insured that every core class (LAL, math, social studies and science) had 90 minute teaching–learning blocks. With the extension of the formal school day, there was more transition and re–shaping of the teaching faculty at BAA. This included recruitment and hiring of more teachers who were also TFA alumni, like the BRICK founders. By the end Year 2, 4 more former TFA teachers had joined BAA in Grades K–5; and another 3 former TFA alumni became teachers in Grades 6–8 at BAA. The stage was set for continued progress toward fully implementing and tweaking the BRICK model in Year 3, and for continuing gains in student achievement outcomes.

Chapter 9

Years 3 and 4 at BRICK Avon Academy (AY 2012–13 and AY 2013–14)

Introduction

This chapter includes researcher field observations at BRICK Avon from January, 2013 to May, 2014. During Year 3 of BRICK Avon implementation, the researcher was imbedded at the school from late January until the end of the school year. In the summer of 2013, the researcher was invited to attend the AY 2013–14 three-day offsite BRICK staff leadership retreat. The researcher continued as an observer at the school during the fall of AY 2013–14. School observations for the present study included classroom observations, faculty meetings, grade level and vertical (across grade) meetings, professional development trainings, various administrative and executive meetings, parent meetings, and other meetings at the school. Research findings for student outcomes, survey data, and interviews with faculty and parents at BRICK Avon follow in Chapters 9–12.

Field Observations: A Typical Day Observed at BRICK Avon Academy

In daily school observations, the researcher would often begin the day at 7:45a.m. out on the playground with the entire student population and BRICK administrators. Each day, the principal and vice principals would be present on the playground from about 7:30–8:25 a.m., greeting parents and students. There were organized playground games for students (supervised by administrators and parent volunteers) until about 8:15am. When it was time to go inside, the administrators had all children line up by their grades and classrooms (this usually took about 10 minutes). The entire student body would be welcomed to the day by Principal Haygood's "Copacetic Morning!!" and led in reciting in unison the BRICK school "chant" on the playground to begin each day:

Figure 9.1

Picture of BRICK Avon Students During Opening Day Chant



Call and repeat (administrator calls with 200+ children in response):

“... I will try everyday,
to be successful!
The more
I learn,
the smarter
I become.
Today,
I
will become smarter!”

(Researcher has a taping of the children reciting this call)

Every classroom teacher or aide would meet their class at the entrance from the playground to greet the children, and to lead students in lines into the school and classroom for the beginning of the day. Over the public address system, a school-wide morning message was read, the pledge of allegiance was recited in unison, and school

announcements were made (led by student leaders). In the lower grade classrooms, the morning began with breakfast, “morning meeting” and then usually 90 minutes of reading and literacy. This session might begin by all of the children sitting on the floor while the teacher read a book with the children. Generally, the students would be divided into four small groups of 4–8 students for reading activities. One group might have been doing reading together with the aide. A second group might have been doing reading with the teacher. Another group might have been practicing skills at their individual levels on the classroom computers. The fourth group might have been doing a center-based activity, or doing independent reading. The youngest students ate lunch during the first lunch period, beginning at 10:40 a.m. After lunch and a recreation period, students might have had gym or visual arts or music once a week. In the afternoon, 90 minutes was devoted to math and to science. The youngest children, Grades K–3, received a snack at around 2:30 p.m (by then it had been 4 hours since their lunchtime). If it was a Friday, the students may have been going to the BRICK store to spend their BRICK Bucks. The youngest students (K–2) were dismissed to their parents from the cafeteria at 4:15 pm. Sometimes, mothers of the kindergarten students would come between 2:30 and 3:30p.m. and ask to take children home early. When this happened (quite frequently), the school would speak with the parents about the importance of arriving on time and staying until the end of the day. (For those students arriving late in the morning, there were sometimes weeks when staff would sit at a table inside the front door to greet students who were tardy and to ask them to explain why they were late.)

The older students had a different routine, especially the middle school students on the third floor of the school. They would change classes each 90 minutes. Their

classes and instructors were departmentalized: literature, social studies, science and math. They also had a period for visual arts, and for music and physical education once each week. Their lunch period was not until nearly 1:00 pm. Once a week, the middle school students would meet in same sex advisory groups with their assigned faculty member to discuss a topic together.

Afterschool clubs and sports met, generally for approximately 90 minutes. This meant that some students and faculty were engaged in afterschool activities until 6pm many days. In Year 3, many of the afterschool activities were led by invited community partners, in order not to over-extend the teachers who had already had an 8-hour day.

The schedule was arranged so that grade level teachers in the lower grades had common “preps” for meetings together, usually twice a week, to review student data with one another, sometimes led by the math or reading coach, the vice principal, or sometimes the grade level lead teacher. This period allowed teachers to review and analyze student assessment data, and discuss various strategies to support student learning. It also provided time for professional development and support. In the middle school, teachers met by departments as well as by grade level once each week.

Faculty and Staff Meetings

Faculty Meetings

Faculty meetings were held once each month after school and were well-planned by administrators for specific school-wide concerns, calendar and communication, and development. Meetings were designed to share information, to build community and collaboration amongst the staff, and to publicly acknowledge outstanding faculty and staff work.

Student Support Team

Additionally, regular (biweekly or monthly) meetings were held of the Student Support team to review individual student problems or school-wide student issues that needed action. The School Support team was comprised of the principal and vice principals, the social workers, the parent liaison, the guidance counselor, the school nurse, and the attendance counselor, and the dean of students. The core members of this team were the guidance counselor, social worker, attendance counselor, and the parent liaison. The researcher asked to be permitted to attend these meetings regularly, and the request was granted. Many issues requiring intervention were addressed by this team. Issues discussed in these meetings were confidential.

Executive Team

Another meeting that the researcher was permitted regular access to was the weekly executive team meeting, held before school (at 7am) once a week. This team was comprised of the founder/director, the principal and the vice principals. This team addressed planning, organizational issues, deadlines and district issues, and human resources issues. The content of these meetings was confidential.

Intervention Meetings

The researcher was also permitted to sit in on Intervention and Referral Services meetings, with the permission of the individual parents. These meetings were scheduled by the lower grade vice principal and generally held for a half or full day, once or twice per month. These meetings were meant to review concerns about individual students who were not making adequate progress in reading or math, or with behavioral concerns. Referrals were made by teachers, with the support of the vice principal. The vice

principal led the process, scheduling the meetings, inviting parents, providing coverage for each teacher to attend, and scheduling the appropriate support staff. The vice principal kept records of the meeting and printed out a copy of the specific agreed goals and intervention strategies to be taken for each student by whom. This record was printed out, and signed by all present, as the plan for action and for review at the next meeting (usually 4–12 weeks later). Subsequent meetings would evaluate whether the various interventions and actions taken were helping the student to make noticeable progress, or if other measures should be taken. Figure 9.2 shows the organization and status of I&RS at BRICK Avon (this bulletin board was visible to faculty but not to students).

Figure 9.2

I&RS Student Status



Leadership

In the present study, the researcher observed and recorded signs that leadership was a visible and supportive presence at the school, during the school day, as well as being outside the school with students and parents before and after school.

Administrators planned (re: executive meetings) frequent ways to show the faculty and staff their support and to let them know they were appreciated. For example, they might leave a small note and a chocolate on each teacher's door as a surprise morning greeting.

Much work had been done by the staff and administrators toward making the grade level goals and curriculum vertically and horizontally aligned (vertical team meetings), and the curriculum coherent—although this was still very much a work in progress. This was especially true because both the school and district were working diligently to align all curriculum and teaching with the Core Content Standards by 2014–2015.

The STEP reading program, along with Balanced Literacy and the Fundamentals (for Phonics) and the Children's Literacy Initiative, were core components in the early grades literacy curriculum. Math and reading scores of students showed steady improvement most years of the BRICK administration (this will be addressed in Chapter 9).

Both the high student transiency rate and the student chronic absenteeism rate were challenges for the entire school community. The school staff was focused upon a goal to decrease the chronic absenteeism rate for the 2013–14 school year (Note that all NPS attendance counselors had been let go by NPS at the end of AY 2012–13).

Student Ownership for Academic Work: Researcher Observations

There were many ways that teachers encouraged students to take ownership for their work, such as posting goals for each subject along with a learning objective for each lesson. In the kindergarten class a “classwork rubric” was posted to encourage students to be knowledgeable and active in self-assessment of their work (Figure 9.3). In the same classroom, a poster showed students the goals for STEP, a brief description of what each STEP represented and the current level for all students in the class (Figure 9.4).

Figure 9.3

Classwork Rubric for Kindergarten Students at BRICK Avon

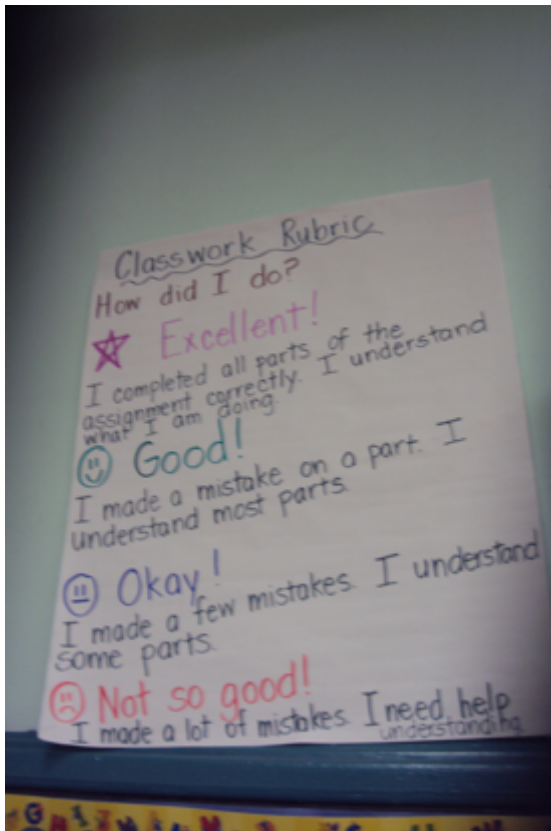
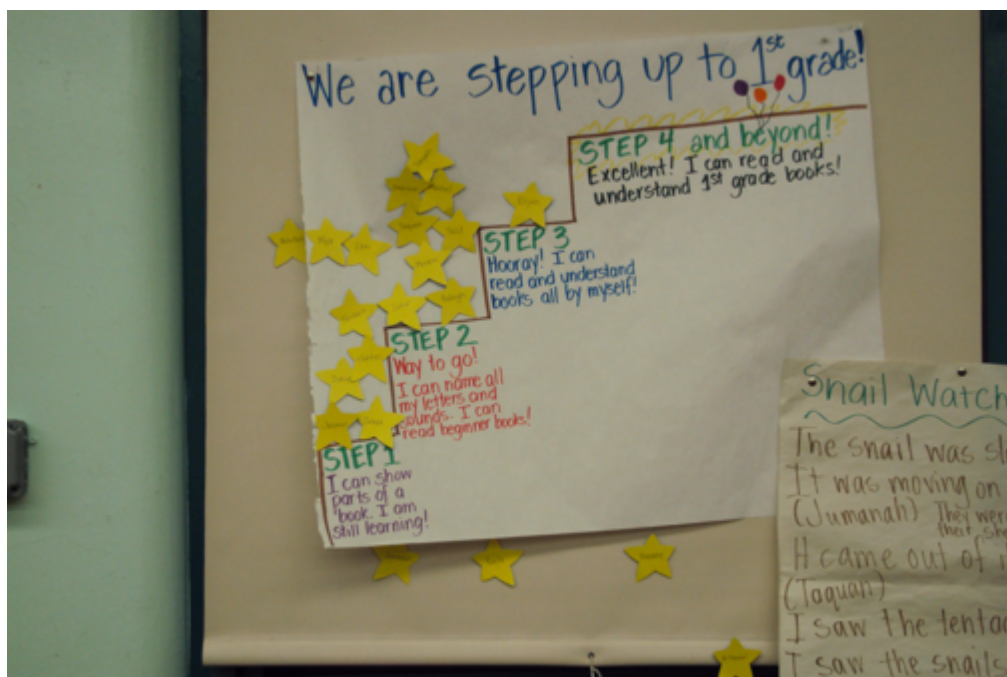


Figure 9.4

A Wall Poster Showing Students the STEPS for Kindergarten and Class Progress



Student-Centered Behavior: Researcher Observations

The researcher observed a high level of faculty and staff focus on the topic of student behavior and the development of systems of discipline and rewards (many committee meetings were held where these standards were discussed and developed into systems and handbooks by faculty and administrators). There was continual focus on standards and implementation of those rules for discipline; and, there was a lot of time devoted to developing systems for incentives and rewards. As a part of the curriculum and the professional development, the school had adopted a positive student Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) development initiative called “Responsive Classroom” for the lower grades; and “Development by Design” for the upper grades. (Note: Ongoing, intensive faculty and staff development and training for this approach was contracted and delivered to teachers and staff in the Summer Institute, beginning in Summer 2012, as

well as periodically throughout the year.) Many strategies introduced through the *Responsive Classroom* initiative to support student social and emotional development was integrated into the daily school activities by teachers, and helped create a more “responsive” culture in each classroom. For example, in the lower grades, each teacher was to have an opening morning meeting; and create various roles to distribute student engagement, responsibility, and leadership in the classroom.

Helping students develop positive, non-violent behavior (in a neighborhood fraught with violence) was addressed by the school community through multiple avenues, including the *Responsive Classroom/Development by Design* framework; the BRICK Bucks and BRICK Store; class, grade and school celebration events; and through various partnerships.

One such partnership was developed by BAA with *PlayWorks*. This was another partnership that addressed development of the whole student and decreasing negative incidences especially during transition times such as lunchtime or recess. The *PlayWorks* partnership at BAA supported the whole child by teaching cooperative social skills through recreation and games. Some students would often have trouble with behavior during transition periods, and in the cafeteria and on the playground. *PlayWorks* is a organization designed to help schools incorporate positive play into their “free periods” on the playground (before– and after–school and at recess and lunch times); and to train staff and students in strategies to promote positive, sportsmanship–like behaviors (vs. fighting, bullying and violence) through structured play that will carry back into the classroom. Each school that developed a partnership with *PlayWorks* like BRICK Avon had a full–time trained instructor (full–time *PlayWorks* AmeriCorps member) who

worked with students and staff on implementing structured play and positive, team-like behavior on the playground and in the school. During the 2012–13 school year, Coach Marcus was the full-time BRICK Avon Academy *PlayWorks* staff member. He provided training and supervision to the students for various playground games, including: 4-corners game; basketball; jump rope; and other team activities on the playground (Figures 9.5 and 9.6). He instituted habits of “high-fives” for complementing students and developing and keeping positive attitudes. He worked with teachers and their classrooms to play games that were collaborative and developed team spirit and good sportsmanship, with direct correlation to classroom culture and behaviors. This also provided teachers with activities with their students where they could participate in collaborative and team activities and be a positive role model while Marcus provided the leadership and directives.

Figure 9. 5

PlayWorks Mission and Components (Bulletin Board)



Figure 9.6

PlayWorks Playground Map of Games at BRICK Avon



Coach Marcus also developed a “Jr. Leaders” program for fifth graders to help on the playground during free time as leaders and mentors for younger children (Figure 9.7). The number of fights and incidents between children on the playground decreased dramatically, according to administrators and teachers, as *PlayWorks* helped to insure that there were positive ground rules and supervised play during free time on the playground. Positive “high fives” and more structured play were evident in observations at the school, on the playground, and in general. The coach was also available to teachers to go into classrooms to further observe and assist teachers with individual student behavior displayed on the playground and in class. Coach Marcus also established sports leagues for the younger students, such as volleyball (Figure 9.8).

Celebration of Student Success: Researcher Observations

Celebrating student success was part of the BRICK model. In the first two years, rewards and celebrations were developed into BAA school traditions and culture (and were supported in large part by the SIG grant). For example, beyond classroom celebrations, student success was celebrated by teachers and administrators after each STEP assessment with a pizza party or other celebration for those students who moved up a step or more. At the end of each marking period there was a celebration for those students on the honor role; and at the end of the year a “Blue Carpet” formal celebration for students who achieved honor role or were “most improved” for the year. On Saturdays, school field trips (by grade levels) allowed students to experience new cultural venues which included the Camden Aquarium, a Broadway play, Baltimore Harbor and Black Wax Museum; Franklin Institute, etc. Each grade got at least four of these trips per year (funded by the SIG grant). Other social events underscored the value of family, such as the BAA Talent Show, or the Father–Daughter Dance. continued celebrations for student success, special activities (e.g., BRICK Avon Talent Show; Father–Daughter Dance). Vice Principal Perpich developed a relationship with Camp Vacamas. Each year he took the 4th and 5th grade classes (separately) on three days of overnight camping and outdoor education during the school week.

Figure 9.7

Junior Coach Leadership Program in PlayWorks for 5th Graders

Program Coordinator: Coach Marcus Lewis
Last updated: Tuesday, January 15th, 2013

Junior Coach (JC) Training Dates

Tuesday, November 27 th , 2012*
Thursday, December 13 th , 2012**
Thursday, January 10 th , 2013**
Thursday, February 14 th , 2013**
Thursday, March 14 th , 2013**
Thursday, April 18 th , 2013**
Thursday, May 9 th , 2013**
Thursday, June 13 th , 2013**

*JC training dates are the 2nd Thursday of every month, EXCEPT for the 1st one
**All meetings will take place IMMEDIATELY after school. Meetings are 30-45 minutes.

Weekly Recess Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Donald Hepburn	Zylire Brown	Mia McDougald	Quana
Janiyah Thomas	Kareem Small	Nagee Souder	Nasir
Shayana Walls	Daniyah McManus	Azzahir Brown	Sharn

Weekly Before-School Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
VOLUNTARY			

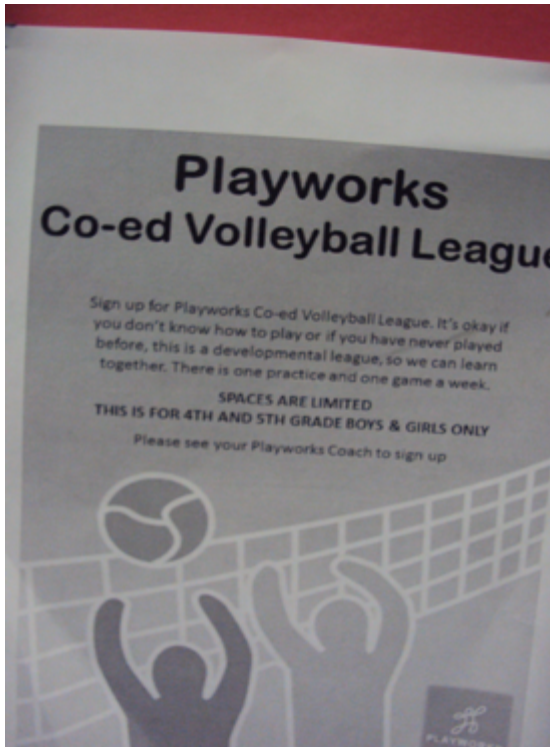
To the parents, teachers, paraprofessionals other staff members, if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you,

Coach Marcus
mlewis@playworks.org

Figure 9.8

Volleyball League for 4th and 5th Graders, PlayWorks at BRICK Avon



Daily recognition of both academic, social, emotional, and behavioral success was underscored by the BRICK Bucks program. The administrators and staff developed the BRICK store as an incentive system for student engagement and behavior. Teachers and staff were given BRICK Bucks to give to students as rewards for both academic achievement and positive behavior or acts of kindness. Figure 9.9 shows BRICK Bucks “earnings” during a two-week period in March for students in one of the kindergarten classes at BRICK Avon.

Bi-weekly, a BRICK store was held in the Parents room (and run by parent volunteers with the parent coordinator) for students to come and “shop” for items using the BRICK Bucks they had “earned.” Items in the store included smaller items such as

Figure 9.10*Items in the BRICK Buck Store*

Classrooms of students would visit the BRICK Bucks Store in the Parent Room to shop with their earnings every two to three weeks. The Store was staffed by the parent liaison and parent volunteers, who would assist students with their shopping, sometimes pointing out fun items in the store with values that were within the student's BRICK Bucks earnings. Items for BRICK Bucks purchases ranged from pencils, notebooks, erasers, toothbrushes, brushes, small novelties, books, games, videos (for a few bucks to 50 Bucks); all the way up to bigger items like a bicycle (for hundreds of BRICK Bucks). See Figure 9.10.

Parental Engagement and Support: Researcher Observations

Parents shared with the researcher how effective the BRICK Bucks were in motivating their children and themselves. For example, at parent–teacher conferences, students were told that if their parents attended, they would receive 30 BRICK Bucks. Children would beg and plead and keep reminding their parents to urge them to attend the parent open house at the school in order to receive an additional 30 BRICK Bucks. Parent participation at parent–teacher conferences may not have been as high as some teachers wished (e.g., 100%), however, parental attendance for the school open house at BAA was often over 200 parents. This may have represented over 50% of the school families and was a large increase over pre–BRICK open houses. Parents who could not attend because of job conflict, etc. would often make alternate arrangements to meet with their child’s teachers. While teachers did a lot to reach out personally to their students’ parents to request their attendance, the BRICK Bucks incentives encouraged students to give extra persuasion to their parents to attend, and definitely gave a “push” in the right direction, to both student behavior and achievement, and to parent participation.

Parent Workshops

Parent workshops were held at a variety of times at the school. Once each week the Parent Liaison led a parent workshop session. Generally, once a month in the late afternoon, the math or reading coach offered a parent workshop to help parents better understand their child(ren)’s learning objectives in math or reading, and specific activities they could do to support complementary learning at home in out of school hours.

Parent Self– and Family Support

There was generally at least one parent support session each week at the school, open to all parents. (The researcher attended many of these from February to May, 2012–13.) These sessions were often held in the Parents Room in the basement and were often led and/or facilitated by the Parent Liaison staff member. Topics included topics such as creating a Vision Board for personal goals; Discipline and your Child; and Parent–Child Communications.

Parental Academic Support for the Child(ren)

Additionally, there was generally at least one parent training every other month about the curriculum and how to support children academically as parents at home. The literacy coach conducted lower grade training for parents, often by grade level, giving out extensive reading and literacy materials for use reinforcing learning at home. For example, a workshop for reinforcing Fundamentals and phonics was given by the literacy coach for parents of children K–3 including many take–home materials. The workshop for parents mirrored classroom activities and literacy learning objectives for each grade level. Similar training workshops for parents were conducted to demonstrate hands on activities and games in math, and to give parents the materials to do these and other similar activities and games at home with their child(ren). These workshops were often afterschool (4:30–6:00 pm). Depending on the topic and grade levels being addressed, the session might overlap with afterschool clubs and activities so that parents could attend workshops while their child (ren) were engaged in other activities, and they could leave the school together at the end. In those I observed, attendance at these parent workshops varied, but often had between 20–40 parents.

Changes in the Faculty at BRICK Avon Academy

Teacher mobility at BRICK Avon happened gradually after the end of each school year, and over four years' time. One dramatic shift came after the first BRICK year (AY 2010–11). After the first year, some teachers were ready to move to another school, and BRICK leaders encouraged some to move on. This was also the point in time when the school day was formally lengthened and 200 hours was added to BRICK Avon's teacher contracts. This additional requirement of time was difficult for some teachers, especially those who had their own children.

Despite BRICK's somewhat abrupt arrival on the scene in Year 1 (AY 2010–2011), the BAA teaching staff for the lower grades remained relatively in tact for Year 2. In those lower grades, BRICK had inherited the entire Avon Avenue School (pre-BRICK) teaching staff for Year 1, with the exception of one K teacher from the BRICK founders' team. From Year 1 to Year 2, there were no changes in BAA teachers in kindergarten,

Tables 9.1 to 9.3 track changes in the teaching staff over BRICK's first four years from Year 1 (AY 2010–11) to Year 4 (AY 2013–14). The tables were adapted by the researcher from data based upon faculty rosters from each school year. Grade 3 and Grade 5. Grades 1, 2 and 4 had more changes for Year 2, but then remained the same through Year 4 (end of the present study). However, kindergarten experienced change in Year 2 when 2 of 3 longtime teachers retired after Year 1. Although the changes in teaching staff in the lower grades was gradual, there was nearly a complete turnover in the teachers in Grades K–5 from pre-BRICK to Year 4, with a few exceptions. There was one pre-BRICK veteran teacher who stayed in Grade 4, and there was no change in any of the teachers in the third grade over this entire period. An interview in the present study

with one of these third grade teachers revealed that these teachers had been departmentalized and working together collaboratively prior to BRICK's arrival at the school. Nevertheless, with all the changes in curriculum and school structure from Year 1–4, it is noteworthy that these veteran teachers stayed on. Grade 3 is a benchmark year for public school students, so having three excellent veteran teachers in this grade served the BAA students and entire community well.

Table 9.1

Grades K–5 Analysis of Change in BAA Faculty from Year 1 (AY 2010–11) to Year 4 (AY 2013–14)

BRICK Avon Academy	Year 1 (AY 2010–11)	Year 2 Returning or repositioned	Year 2 New to BRICK	Year 3 New to BRICK	Year 4 New to BRICK
K	3*(1 TFA)	3 (1 TFA)	0	2 (of 3)	0 (of 3)
1	3	1	2 (2 TFA)	1 (of 3)	0 (of 3)
2	2	1	2 (of 3)	0 (of 2)	0 (of 2)
3	3	3	0	0 (of 3)	0 (of 3)
4	3	1	2 (2 TFA)	0 (of 3)	0TFA (of 3)
5	2	2	1(TFA)	0 (of 3)	1(1of 3)
Special needs	1		1	0 (of 1)	1(of 1)
Mandarin Chinese	1	1	0	1	0 same as prev year
vice principal	1	1	0	0	0

Note. One member of BRICK founders was a kindergarten teacher new to BAA in 2010

Table 9.2

Grades 6–8 Analysis of Change in BAA Faculty from Year 1 (AY 2010–11) to Year 4 (AY 2013–14)

BRICK Avon Academy	Year 1 (AY 2010–11)	Year 2 Returning or repositioned	Year 2 New to BRICK	Year 3 New to BRICK	Year 4 New to BRICK
K	3*(1 TFA)	3 (1 TFA)	0	2 (of 3)	0 (of 3)
1	3	1	2 (2 TFA)	1 (of 3)	0 (of 3)
2	2	1	2 (of 3)	0 (of 2)	0 (of 2)
3	3	3	0	0 (of 3)	0 (of 3)
4	3	1	2 (2 TFA)	0 (of 3)	0TFA (of 3)?
5	2	2	1(TFA)	0 (of 3)	1(1of 3)
Special needs	1		1	0 (of 1)	1(of 1)
Mandarin Chinese	1	1	0	1	0 same as prev year
Vice Principal	1	1	0	0	0

Table 9.3

ADMINISTRATIVE FACULTY and STAFF—Analysis of Change in BAA Faculty from Year 1 (AY 2010–11) to Year 4 (AY 2013–14)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 2 New to BRICK	Year 3 New to BRICK	Year 4 New to BRICK
All School:					
Principal	1	same	same	same	same
Director/Chief Operating Officer	1	same	same	same	same
Reading Coach Instructional/PD)	1 (whole school)	1– K–5		0	1 of 2
Math Coach Instructional/ PD	1	1 K–5 (of 2) *1 6–8(of 2) *repositioned to new position	0	0	0
Reading Resource/Instructional Intervention	1	1 6–8 (of 2)	1 K–5 new position	0	1 new (6–8)
Social Worker	1	0 same	0 same	0 same	Cut position
Nurse	1	1	0	0 same	0 same
Guidance Counselor	1	0 same	0	0 same	0 same
Social Worker Special Needs	1	0 same	0	0same	0 same
Dean of Discipline	0	1 repositioned new SIG behavioral health position	No change	No change	No change
Instrumental Music	?	?	?	1	0 same
Choral Music	1	1	0 same	0 same	Cut position
Visual Arts	1	1	0	0	0
Visual Arts PT				1	1
Parent Liaison (para)	1	1	0	0 same	0 same
Vice Principal					* 1 added

In the upper grades (6–8), there was much more repositioning and change in teachers for BRICK’s Year 2. Then the teaching staff remained relatively the same through Year 4 (end of this study). BRICK’s Year 2 (AY 2011–12) was the year that the formal school day was increased over an hour per day, and this influenced a number of teachers’ decisions to leave BRICK after Year 1.

Because BRICK was a part of the NPS system, they were also a part of the recruitment system for the district. This meant that many of the teachers whom they recruited to fill openings at BAA were teachers transferring from other NPS schools. In a period of time in which enrollment was rising at charter schools in Newark, other traditional public schools in Newark were being shuttered. This meant that teachers at schools that were closing were looking for other placements within the district. BRICK's founders association with TFA as alumni also served to attract other TFA alumni to BAA. Of the new teachers hired on to teach at BAA during the first four years of BRICK's tenure, four K–5 teachers and four 6–8 teachers were TFA alumni, continuing to work in the NPS system.

There were relatively few changes in administrators over the first four years of BRICK Avon. In Year 2, the middle school vice principal was offered a principal position at another district school. One of the founders who had been director of data in the first year, received her supervisor certificate in the fall and returned as the vice principal of the middle school in January of 2012. The two vice principals served as co-leaders during the fall of 2012 (Year 3) when the principal had to go out on medical leave. The administrators added an additional vice principal position at BRICK Avon for the fourth (2013–14) year for Grades K–2. They interviewed and promoted the literacy coach to that position. This was done for a number of reasons, including succession planning and also in preparation for losing two coaching positions after the School Improvement Grant ended.

Certainly, the some of the changing of faculty and staff was a part of insuring that teachers at BRICK Avon wanted to be there and were “bought in” to the goals and

strategies of BRICK. Some change in faculty was due to major changes in the structure and lengthening of the formal school day at BRICK in Year 2, and how those changes fit into the needs and availability of teachers, especially those with school-aged children themselves.

Some changes were driven by budget or changes at the district level. The unexpected announcement by the Newark state-appointed superintendent at the end of Year 3 that the formal structure and method of teacher pay for the extra formal learning time would NOT be honored by the district in Year 4, was cause for some teachers unhappily to leave BRICK after the third year, both for financial reasons and as a matter of principle.

BRICK Planning and Goals for 2013–14 and Beyond

As a closing to BRICK Avon year three and four research findings and as a nod to Chapter 13 about BRICK and BRICK Avon Academy from 2014–15 to 2019–20, the BRICK 2013–2018 Five Year Strategic Plan (2013) document provides a look into BRICK's vision for the future. BRICK's strategic direction and goals are included in this plan and take a radical shift from the school-based focus of the BRICK 2012–13 Five Year Strategic Plan (2012), to a broader vision for supporting the children and families at schools in the South Ward of Newark.

The five year Goals BRICK shared with the school and the community in 2013 reflect the concerns of the BRICK founders that the health of families and the community was influential in the education of BRICK Avon students. The absence of a lead social service agency in the South Ward was a concern that BRICK Director Lee envisioned doing something to change that.

BRICK Goals for 2013–2018

- *Increase quality neighborhood options in the South Ward (Clinton Hill Area)*
 - Add 2–3 schools to BRICK’s portfolio
 - Increasing interventions to ensure that all children can succeed (i.e., therapeutic board school)
- *Create a sustainable organization: fiscal, human capital and community capital*
 - BRICK funding model is fully diverse: 33% Foundations & Individuals; and 33% Public Funds
 - BRICK has a board that is the same caliber of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund
- *Build a model that supports strong families and strong communities*
 - Opening and running a Family Success Center (Expected 2015)
 - Transient population in the Clinton Hill area of the South Ward is decreased by 50%
- *Strengthen the partnership between Newark Public Schools and BRICK*
 - BRICK Academy becomes a national model that uses schools as change agents for community development

BRICK 2013–2018 Five Year Strategic Plan [2018 GOALS] Draft (see full document in Appendix C)

These goals reflect a vision for the BRICK organization that has interesting parallels and differences from the Full Community Schools model and the Harlem Children’s Zone model for school reform. It represents the belief of the BRICK founders that healthy neighborhoods and families are synergetic and dynamic with healthy institutions in the neighborhoods—especially schools.

Summary of Chapter 9

Field observations in Year 3 at BRICK Avon suggested that teachers and staff were actively collaborating on shared goals for student well-being and success at the school. A number of systems, supports and traditions had been established and had become familiar to the BRICK Avon learning community. Systems such as technology in every classroom available to support education and differentiated learning; Intervention and Referral Services to address individual students who were not showing adequate progress toward learning goals; and systems such as individualized professional development which was beginning to be widely practiced at the school to offer targeted instructional support. Additional time in the formal school day allowed for longer learning units (90 minutes), as well as for time for teachers to work together to analyze student data and to plan strategies for effective instruction.

Student behavior and social and emotional development had also been addressed in part through initiatives such as *Responsive Classroom/Development by Design*, *PlayWorks*, and by student recognition and incentives (e.g., BRICK Bucks and Store; Blue Carpet honor event; smaller recognition celebrations). Student behavior remained a concern at BRICK Avon.

Parental engagement at the school to support student development was both a school-wide and teacher by teacher effort that showed structure and promise but was still a “work in progress.”

Student transiency rates and chronic absenteeism remained high. The faculty and staff had transitioned over four years to those who chose to be a part of the BRICK Avon community. The new contract and announcement by the superintendent at the end of the third year placed teachers at BRICK Avon in an emotional turmoil and decision about

whether or not to stay at the school for the fourth year with vastly reduced salary for the 200 extra hours (\$3,000 instead of \$15,000 that had been previously agreed upon).

Chapter 10

Student Outcomes—Empirical Data for Years 1 Through 4 (2010–2014)

Introduction

Chapter 10 analyzes empirical data about student outcomes at BRICK Avon over the first four years based upon student assessments and standardized test scores. In Grades K–3, the main literacy assessment used by BRICK was the Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress (STEP) program. In Grades 3–8, the measure most utilized to present annual student academic outcomes was the standardized state test called the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK).

Student Outcomes: The STEP Reading Assessment Program

The Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress (STEP) program gave teachers at BRICK Avon an intensive, deep assessment of each student's competency in reading comprehension and a developmental guide for each child's learning needs in reading. Because STEP assessments were conducted three to four times a year by BRICK classroom teachers to both guide instruction and measure progress, it was worthwhile to take a look at the STEP assessment outcomes for K–3 annually and over time. Furthermore, since state achievement tests were not given to measure achievement before Grade 3, the STEP assessment data allowed a look at data and progress in reading development and competency for the younger children, Grades K–3. The STEP developmental assessment and reading program was originally developed by a team of researchers at University of Chicago led by Tony Bryk and David Kerbow (<https://uchicagoimpact.org/our-offerings/step>).

Figure 10.1*STEP Levels and Targets for Each Grade Level Grades K–3*

				Grade 3	STEPS 10–12
				Grade 2 STEPS 7–9 Reading Stamina: <i>holding all the characters and subplots together over time</i>	Subtlety and Flexibility: <i>Recognizing figurative language, genres and text structures while self-monitoring comprehension</i>
Pre-Reading & STEP 0	Kindergarten	Grade 1	STEPS 4–6	Reading silently: making sense from words, not pictures	
		STEPS 1–3			
		Word Solving: <i>unknown words</i>			
	Pre-Kindergarten	Concepts about print			

Note. Source: adapted from STEP program <https://uchicagoimpact.org/our-offerings/step>

In reviewing the data, it was first important to note how low the reading comprehension of BAA kindergarten students was at the beginning of each school year (as measured by the STEP initial assessment). Until the 4th year (AY 2013–14), over 90% of the children in kindergarten were assessed at a pre–0 or 0 step in the fall assessment. Likewise, it was impressive to note how many kindergarten children moved to grade level competency or above (STEP 3) by their final STEP assessment each year. For example, in the first year 35% of K students met and 27% exceeded the grade-level target (STEP 3) by the final assessment. An additional 17% of K students were at STEP 2, one step below grade level competency. Looking at limitations of this method of assessment, it is possible that the assessments were influenced by the teachers' lack of familiarity and competency with the intensive, one-on-one assessment process in the

first year. This was further borne out by the initial first grade assessment the following fall, where 27% of the first grade students were at the STEP 3 or above level vs. 62% being at STEP 3 in kindergarten the previous Spring. This seems like a somewhat high discrepancy even taking into account student transiency and summer slippage. This trend in student reading improvement and competency in the final STEP assessments for kindergarten students continued to improve over the following three years. The last year of the present study, AY 2013–14, showed the least progress from the initial to the final assessments for K students in that year, with only 35% of kindergarten students meeting or exceeding the STEP 3 target (vs. 60% or above in the three preceding years) in the final assessment.

This chapter begins with a presentation of annual STEP results by grade for BRICK Year 4 (AY 2013–14) and then results for each grade level over four years. After looking at results grade by grade over four years, a further analysis tracks cohorts of students by successive grades across the years.

Table 10.1

Grade Kindergarten AY 2013–14 End of Year; STEP Achievement Data BRICK Avon Academy

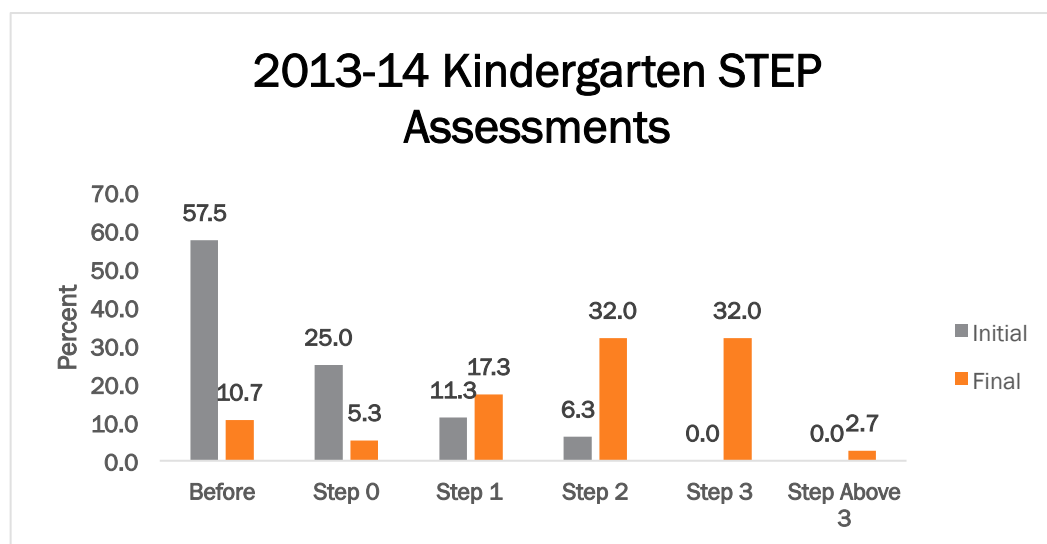
AY 2013–14	Initial Assessment	Final Assessment
# of Students	80	75
Before STEP	46	8
Pre– Read STEP 0	20	4
STEP 1	9	13
STEP 2	5	24
STEP 3	-----	24
Above STEP 3	-----	2

Note. Source: adapted from BRICK Avon data

Beginning with kindergarten in 2013–24, Table 10.1 gives raw data for initial and final STEP assessment results for children in kindergarten at BRICK Avon. Figure 10.2 shows the dramatic change in 2013–14 STEP assessment scores of students from the fall to their scores in the Spring. In the beginning of the school year, most (77.5%) of the students entering kindergarten were below STEP 1 reading level. By the end of the year, the STEP assessments showed only 16% remained at this low pre-reading level. Additionally, 35% of the students placed on a first grade reading level (STEP 3) or above. Another 32% of the students placed one STEP below grade level on STEP 2.

Figure 10.2

AY 2013–14 Initial and Final STEP Assessments for Kindergarten Students at BRICK Avon Academy

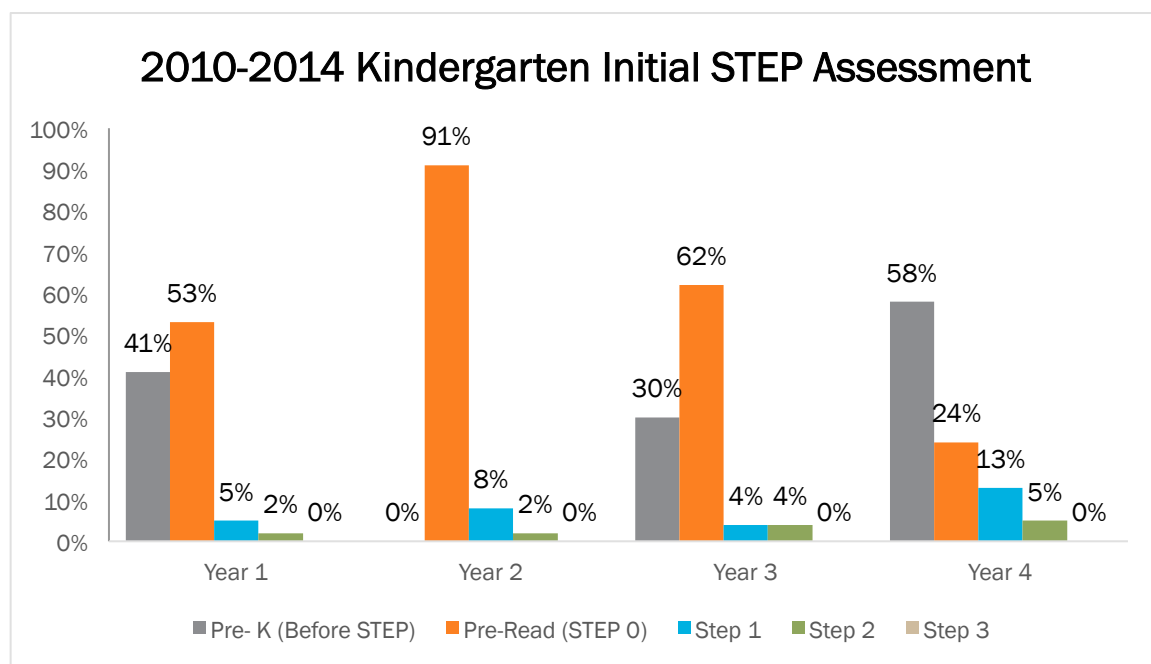


Note. Initial assessment: N= 80; Final assessment: N= 75. Source: adapted from BRICK Avon data.

Examining the kindergarten students' STEP scores over four years at BRICK Avon Academy, Figure 10.3 shows that over 90% of the students in the first three years initially scored below a STEP 1 in the fall assessment. However, by the Spring (Figure 8.4) , close to 60% of students scored on or above grade level for the final assessment during the first three years. In year four, 82% of students were below STEP 1 on the initial assessment, and only 35% of the kindergarten students scored on or above first grade level in the final assessment.

Figure 10.3

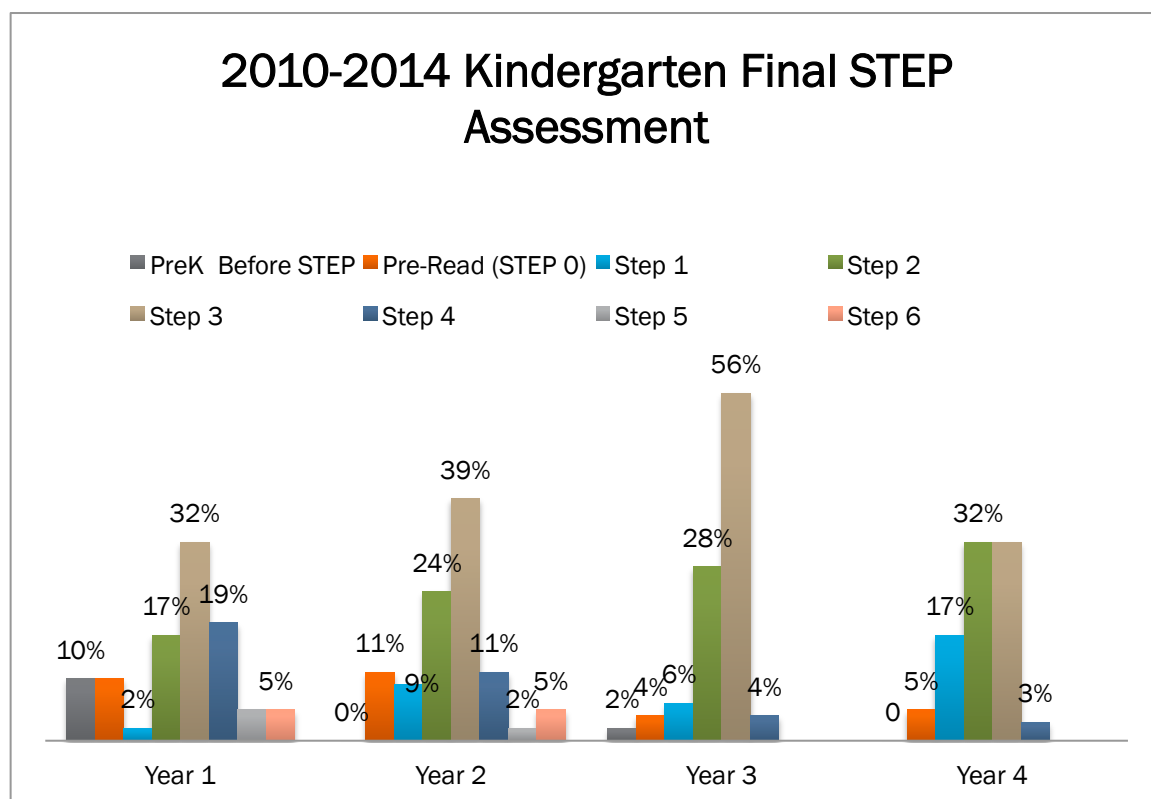
Initial Kindergarten STEP Assessment Over Four Years 2010–2014 at BRICK Avon Academy



Note. Source: adapted from BRICK Report Fall 2013 and final assessment scores for Year 4 from 2013–14 BRICK End of Year Report data.

Figure 10.4

Final Kindergarten STEP Assessment over Four Years 2010–2014 at BRICK Avon Academy

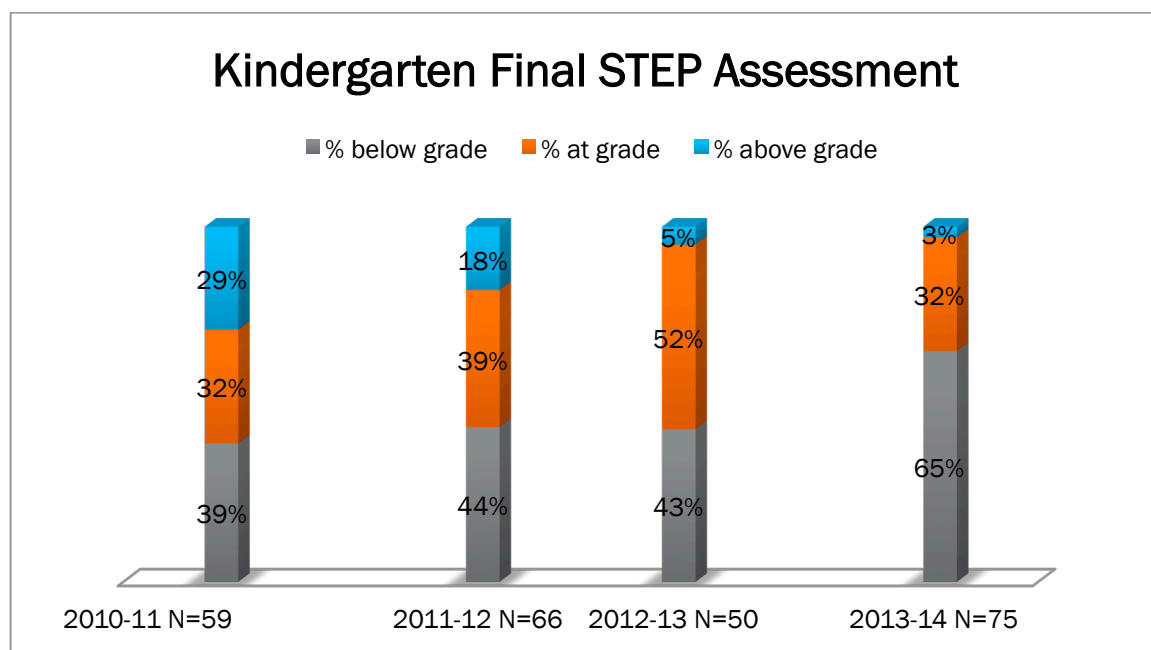


Note. Source: adapted from BRICK Report Fall 2013 and final assessment scores for Year 4 from 2013–14 BRICK End of Year Report data.

Figure 10.5 shows the final kindergarten student assessments over four years by “below,” “on grade level” and “above grade level.” One explanation for the drop in final student STEP assessment outcomes in Year 4 is that the number of students in kindergarten in 2013–14 jumped up to 72 students—25 students per classroom versus the 18–22 students per classroom in the first three years. (In Years 3 and 4, BRICK administrators actively recruited students to BRICK Avon Academy in order to boost the budget in order to help sustain the work they were doing once the School Improvement Grant ended at the end of the 2013–14 year.)

Figure 10.5

Final STEP Assessment for Kindergarten at BRICK Avon Over 4 Years of BRICK Implementation 2010–2014



Note. Source: adapted from BRICK 2014 End of Year Report. Discrepancy in Year 2 data: used data from 2013 BRICK Fall Report.

Table 10.2 shows raw data for initial and final STEP assessment scores for students in Grade 1 for AY 2013–14.

Table 10.2

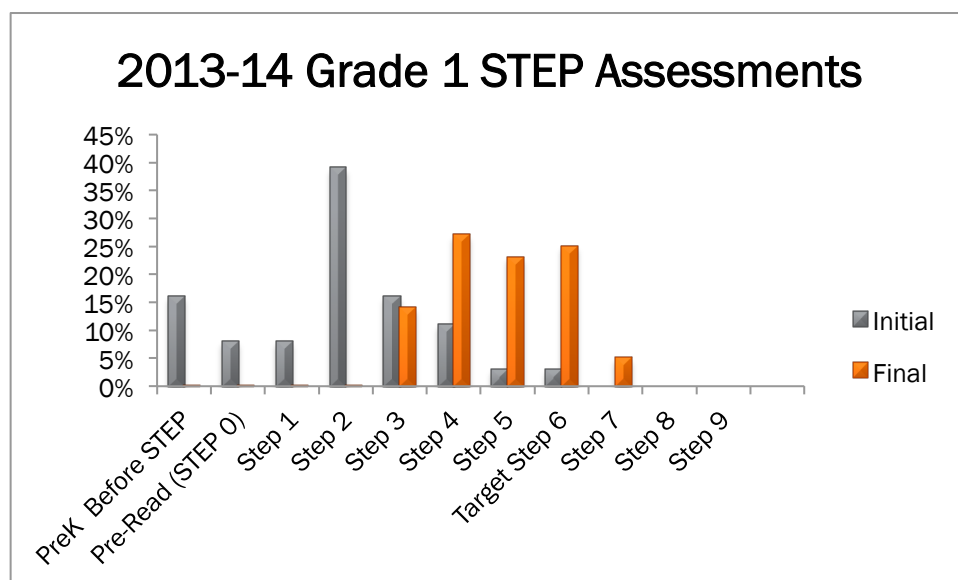
First Grade AY 2013–14 End of Year STEP Achievement Data BRICK Avon Academy

2013–14	Initial Assessment	Final Assessment
# of Students	68	64
Before STEP	12	---
Pre-Read (STEP 0)	6	
STEP 1	4	
STEP 2	25	4
STEP 3	11	9
STEP 4	7	17
STEP 5	2	15
STEP 6	----	16
Above STEP 6	----	3

Figure 10.6 displays initial and final STEP assessment scores for AY 2013–14 for students in Grade 1, and shows the increase in students’ reading competency from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. The goal for the first graders is to reach a beginning second grade competency (STEP 6) by the end of the year. All of the students have moved into a first grade reading level by the end of the year (STEP 3–STEP 5). Furthermore, more students have moved to either near 2nd grade level (STEP 5) or to “on” or “above” grade level (STEP 6 or above) by the end of the year. Nevertheless, by the end of the year there are still a number of students who are not near to the beginning second grade reading level (STEP 6) and are still on STEP 3 or STEP 4.

Figure 10.6

AY 2013–14 Initial and Final STEP Assessments for Grade 1 Students at BRICK Avon Academy



Note. Source: adapted from BRICK Avon data.

In the initial assessment of first grades in the fall of 2013 (Figure 10.6), only 33% of the first grade students were reading at a first grade level (STEP 3 or above). Without tracking individual student scores, it is not clear how much of the difference between assessment scores from the end of the last year (60% students on or above grade level) and the beginning of this year (33% students on or above grade level) is due to “summer slippage,” a change in students, the difference in the teacher assessing the reading, the discomfort of students with a new teacher at the beginning of the year, or other reasons.

Figure 10.7

Initial Grade 1 STEP Assessment 2010–2014 at BRICK Avon Academy

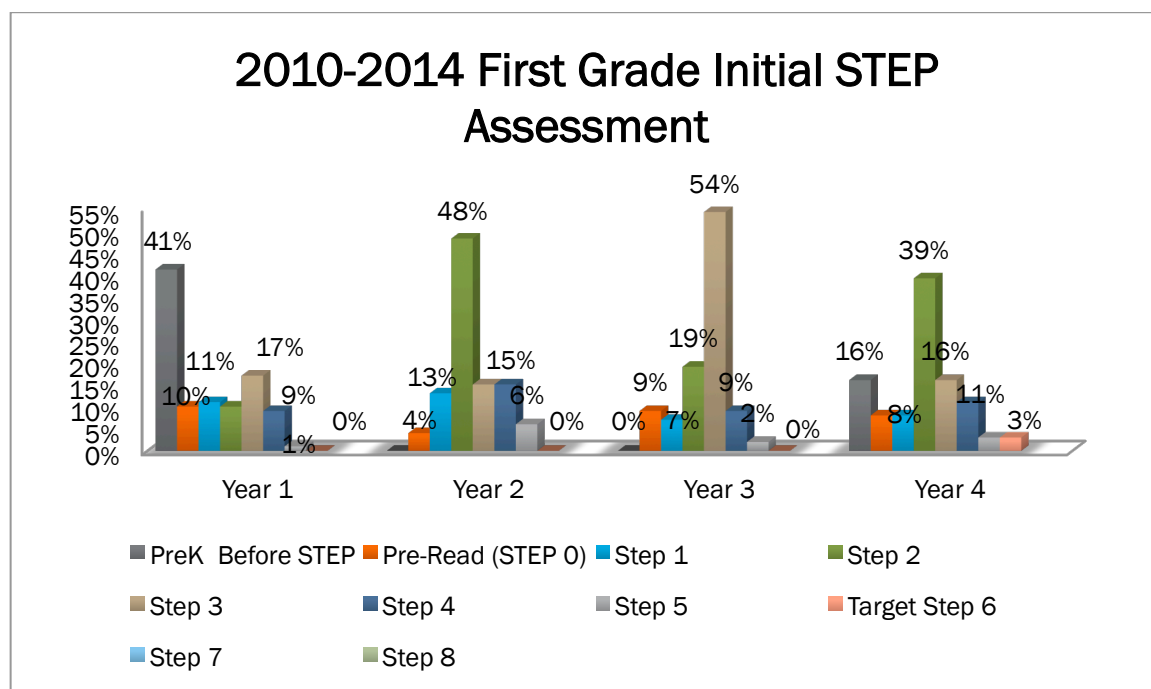


Figure 10.8

Final Grade 1 STEP Assessment 2010–2014 at BRICK Avon Academy

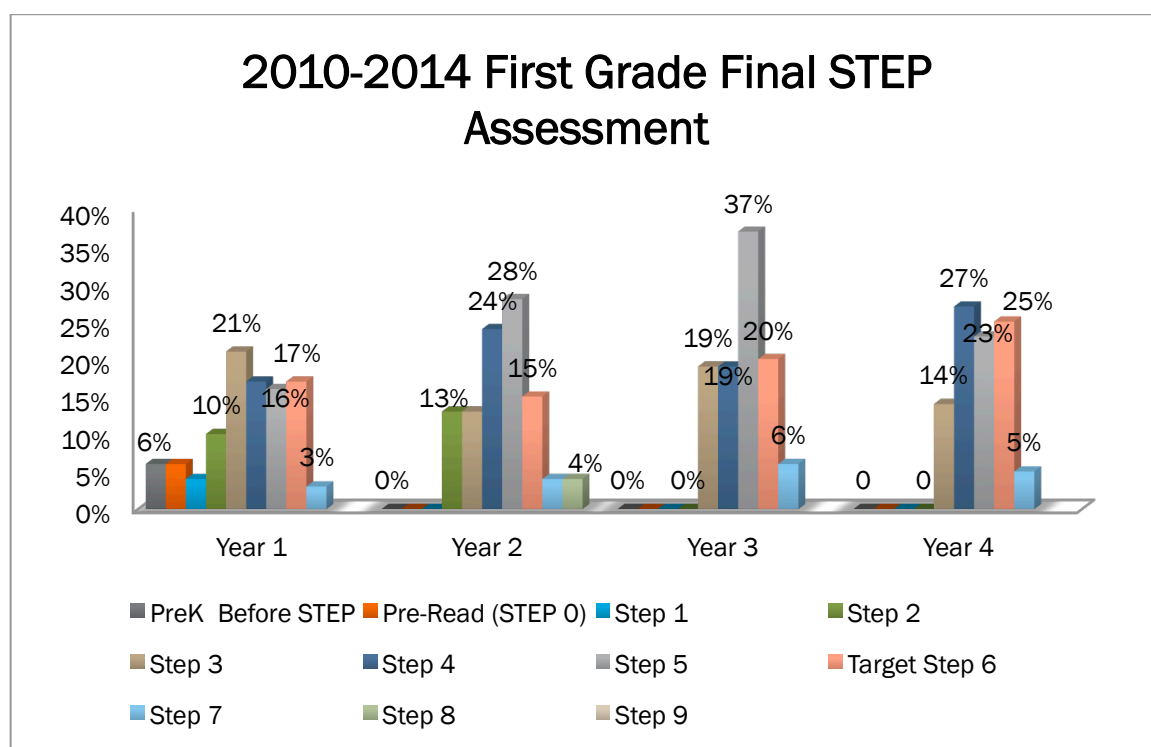
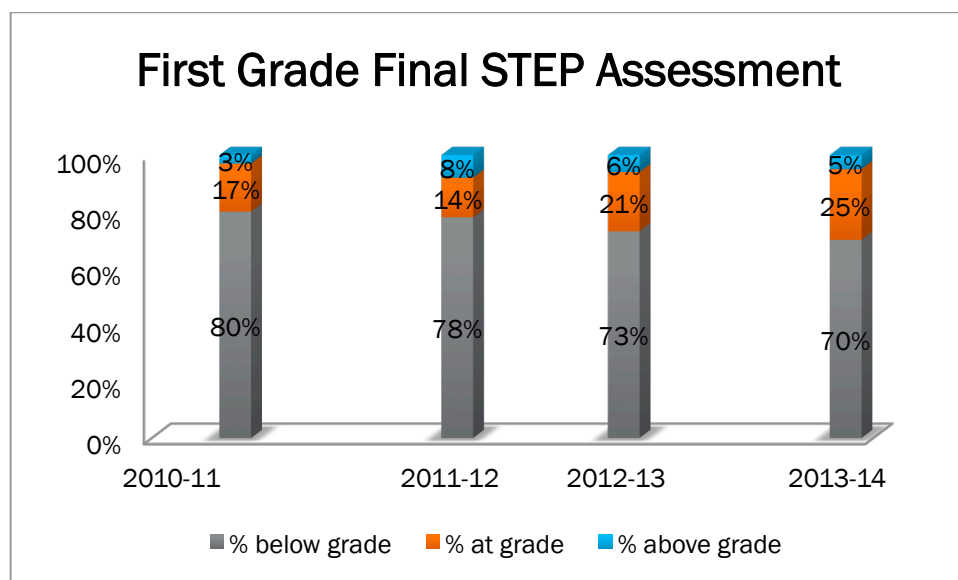


Figure 10.7 displays the initial STEP reading assessments over four years for students in first grade. Except in Year 3 (2012–12) where there are 54% of students who are initially assessed on STEP 3 (and 11% who are above STEP 3), the patterns show that the majority incoming students are below a beginning grade level competency for first grade (STEP 3) at the beginning of the year, but most students (90% or above) have moved into the current grade level reading range by the end of the year. Additionally, after the first year, more students move on/above (STEP 6 or above) or closer to (STEP 5) the next grade level competency by the year-end assessment (Figure 10.8).

Figure 10.9*Final STEP Assessment for Grade 1 at BRICK Avon 2010–2014*

Note. Sources: BRICK Final Report 2013–14 and data in 2013–14 adapted from BRICK Avon data.

The first grade final STEP assessments show slow, but not dramatic progress over four years in increased reading and comprehension skills. Students scoring a Step 6 or above by the end of the second grade were assessed as “on or above” grade level and ready for second grade work. As Figure 10.9 shows, the number of first graders showing steady gains in being on or above grade level in the final STEP assessments over four years went from 20% on or above grade level in the first year to 30% in the fourth year (2013–14). A more in–depth, detailed look at these scores in a bit will show more dramatic increases over the year as well as nuances in student competency levels (e.g., how many students fell one step below grade level competency).

Table 10.3 and Figure 10.10 show a similar increase in second graders' reading competency to the other students from the beginning to the final STEP assessment for the grade in 2013–14.

Table 10.3

Second Grade AY 2013–14 End of Year STEP Achievement Data BRICK Avon Academy

2013-14	Initial Assessment	Final Assessment
# of Students	68	64
Before STEP	12	---
Pre-Read (STEP 0)	6	
STEP 1	4	
STEP 2	25	4
STEP 3	11	9
STEP 4	7	17
STEP 5	2	15
STEP 6	----	16
Above STEP 6	----	3

Figure 10.10

AY 2013–14 Initial and Final STEP Assessments for Grade 2 BRICK Avon Academy

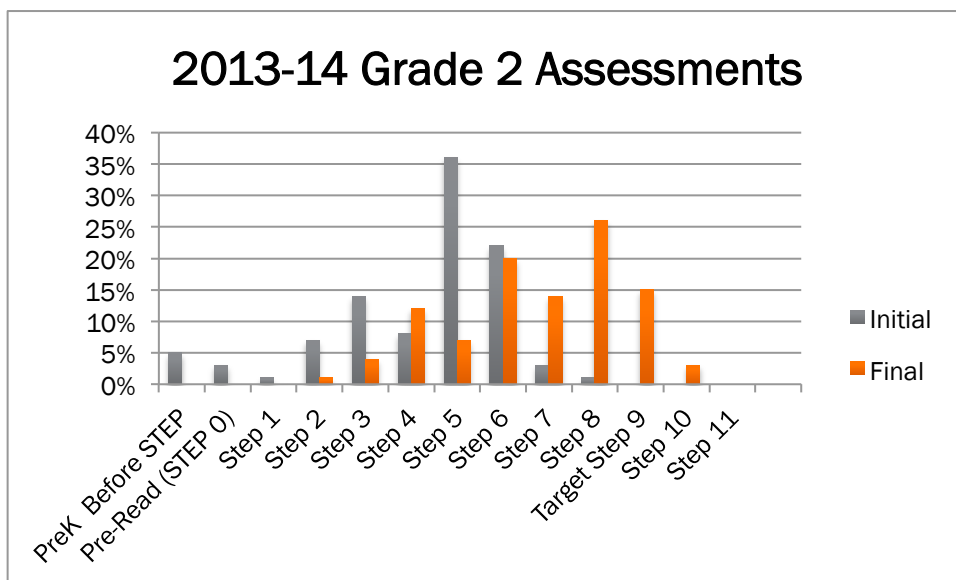
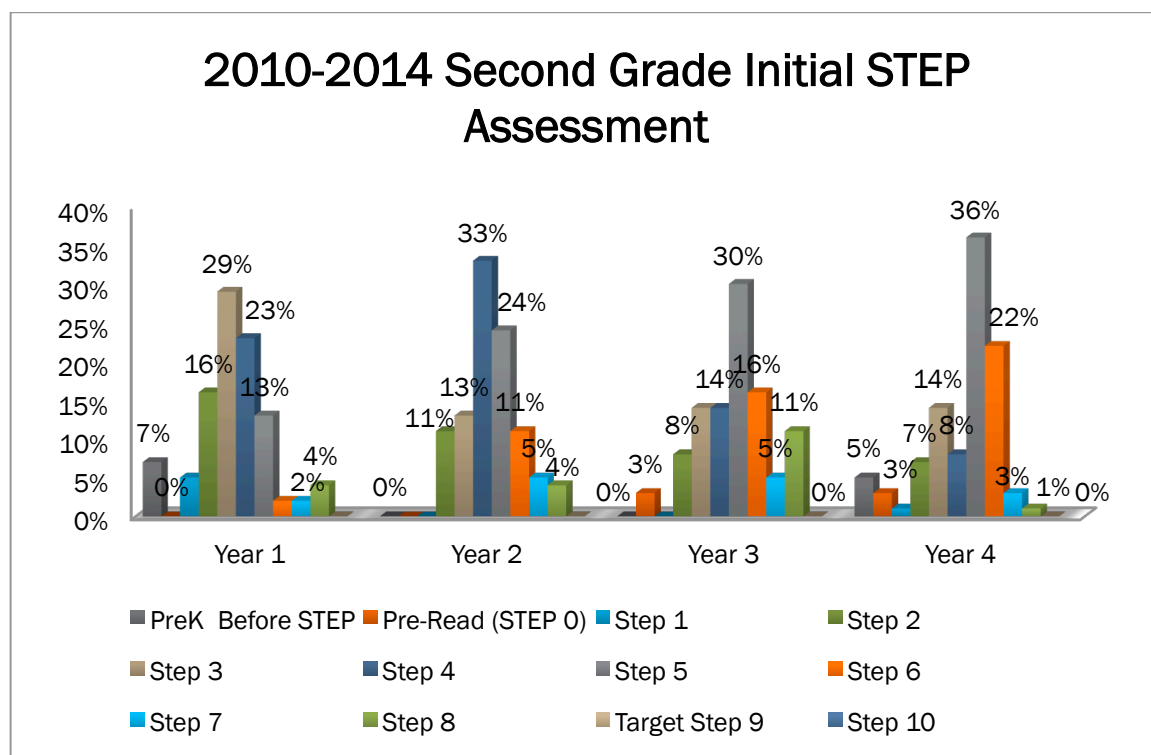


Figure 10.11

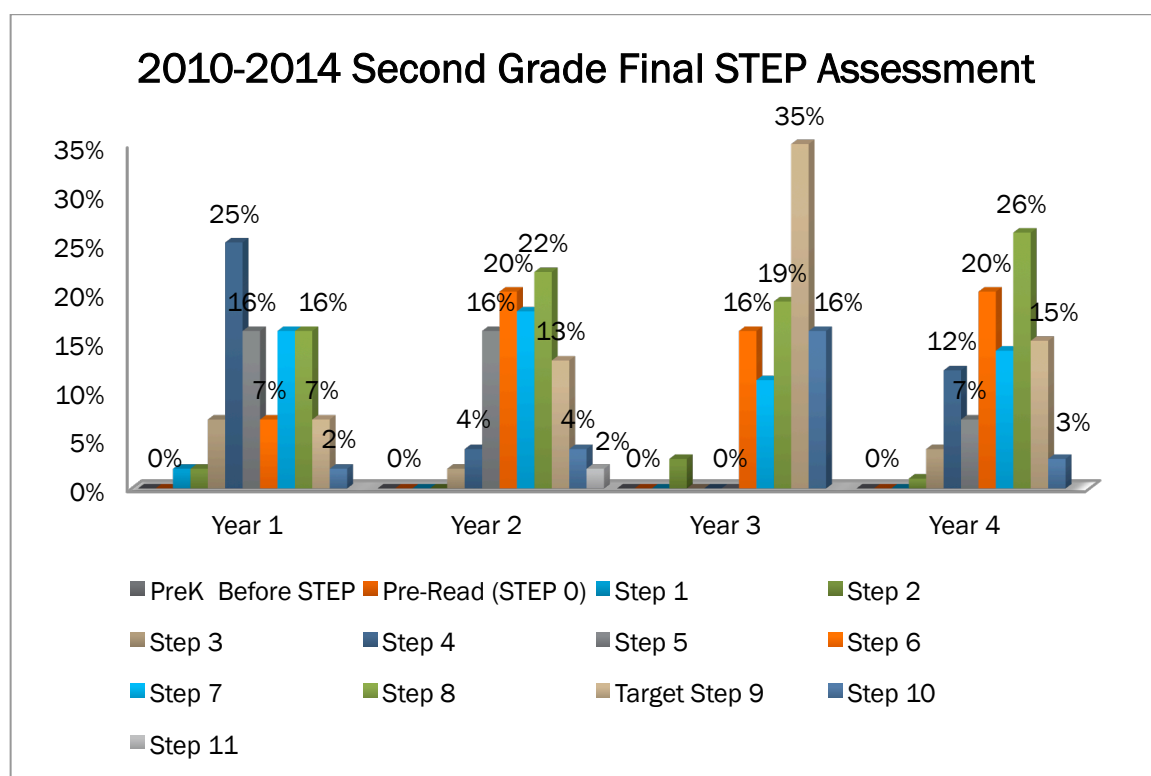
Initial Grade 2 STEP Assessment 2010–2014 at BRICK Avon Academy



Note. Source: adapted from BRICK Final Report 2013–14.

Figure 10.12

Final Grade 2 STEP Assessment 2010–2014 at BRICK Avon Academy.



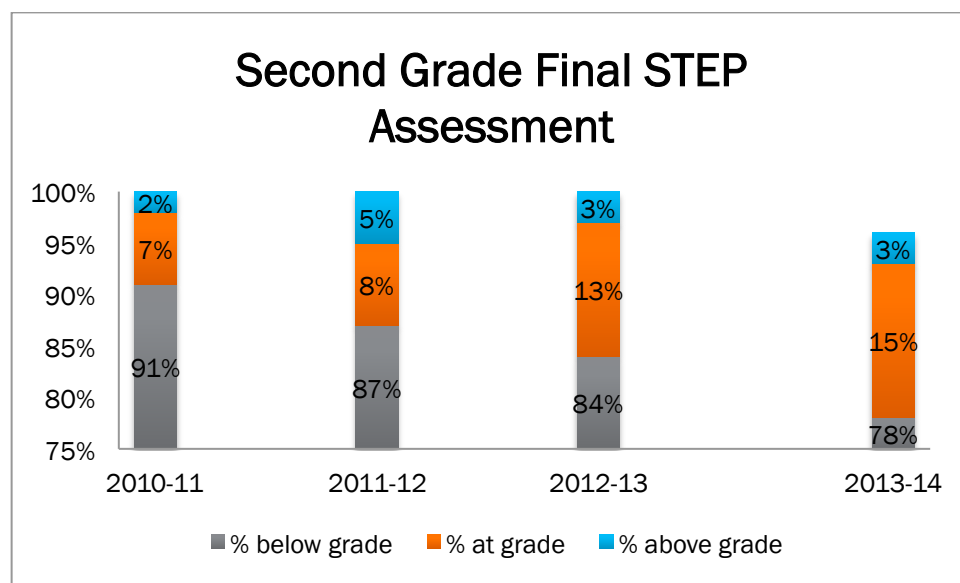
Note. Source: adapted from BRICK Final Report 2013–14.

In the second grade STEP year end assessments (Figure 10.12), we can see compounding effects of students failing to reach grade level by the end of the year as they move on to each successive grade without acquiring grade level reading skills. In the end-of-year STEP assessment data (Figure 10.13), we can see that only 9% of second grade students tested “on or above” 3rd grade competency level (STEP 9) in the first year, 13% at the end of the 2nd year, 16% at the end of the third year, and 18% at the end of the fourth year. Again, this is a 9% increase over 4 years (vs. the 10% increase over the same period for kindergarten). A number of factors influence student learning outcomes shown in these graphs, including teacher strength and student transiency rates

(students tested at the beginning of the year are not necessarily the same students tested at the end of the year).

Figure 10.13

Final STEP Assessment for Grade 2 at BRICK Avon 2010–2014



Note. Source: adapted from BRICK Final Report 2013–14 and data in 2013–14 adapted from BRICK Avon data.

Table 10.4*Third Grade AY 2013–14 End of Year STEP Achievement Data.*

2013–2014	Initial Assessment	Final Assessment
# of Students	62	73
Before Step	—	—
Pre-Read (Step 0)	—	—
Step 1	1	—
Step 2	3	—
Step 3	1	2
Step 4	2	—
Step 5	4	4
Step 6	16	2
Step 7	9	5
STEP 8	15	20
STEP 9	9	8
STEP 10	1	5
STEP 11	1	15
STEP 12		6

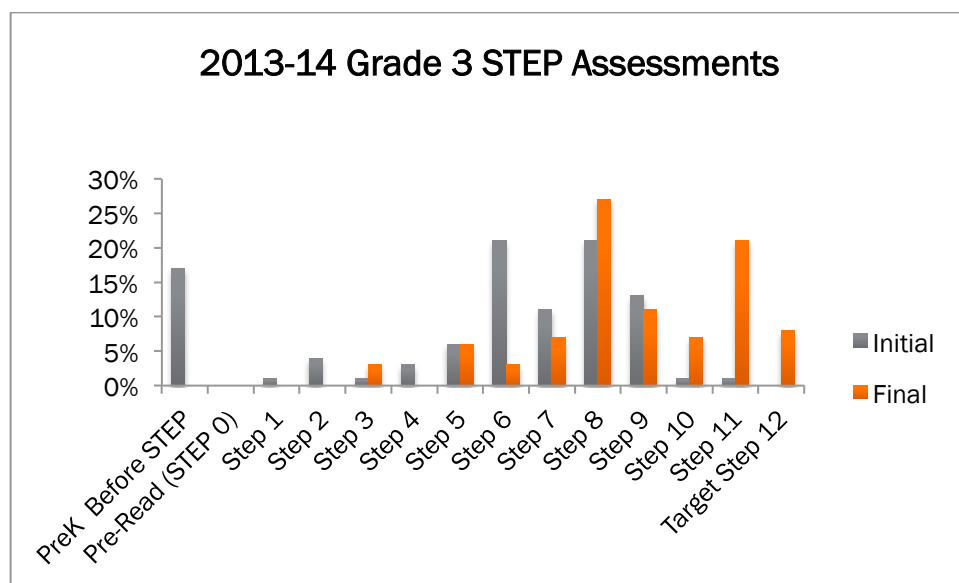
Note. Source: adapted from BRICK Final Report 2013–14.

Table 10.4 and Figure 10.14 show final STEP assessment outcomes for third graders in the fourth year at BRICK Avon Academy. In the initial assessment, a number of students fell at the very lowest level (pre-K Before STEP), but about 50% fell within second grade reading level competency (STEPS 6–8), and about 15% started on a third grade level. Although only 8% of the third grades reach their target for the end of the third grade (STEP 12) by the end of the year, 21% are at STEP 11 (just below target) and another 18% of the students are within the third grade reading level (STEP 9–10). Another 27% of the student scores placed at STEP 8, very near a beginning 3rd grade reading level (STEP 9). All but 9% of the students, however, have moved into second grade reading competency (STEP 6–9) by the end of the year, a large increase for the

30% of students who placed on very low levels (from pre-K to first grade levels) at the beginning of the year.

Figure 10.14

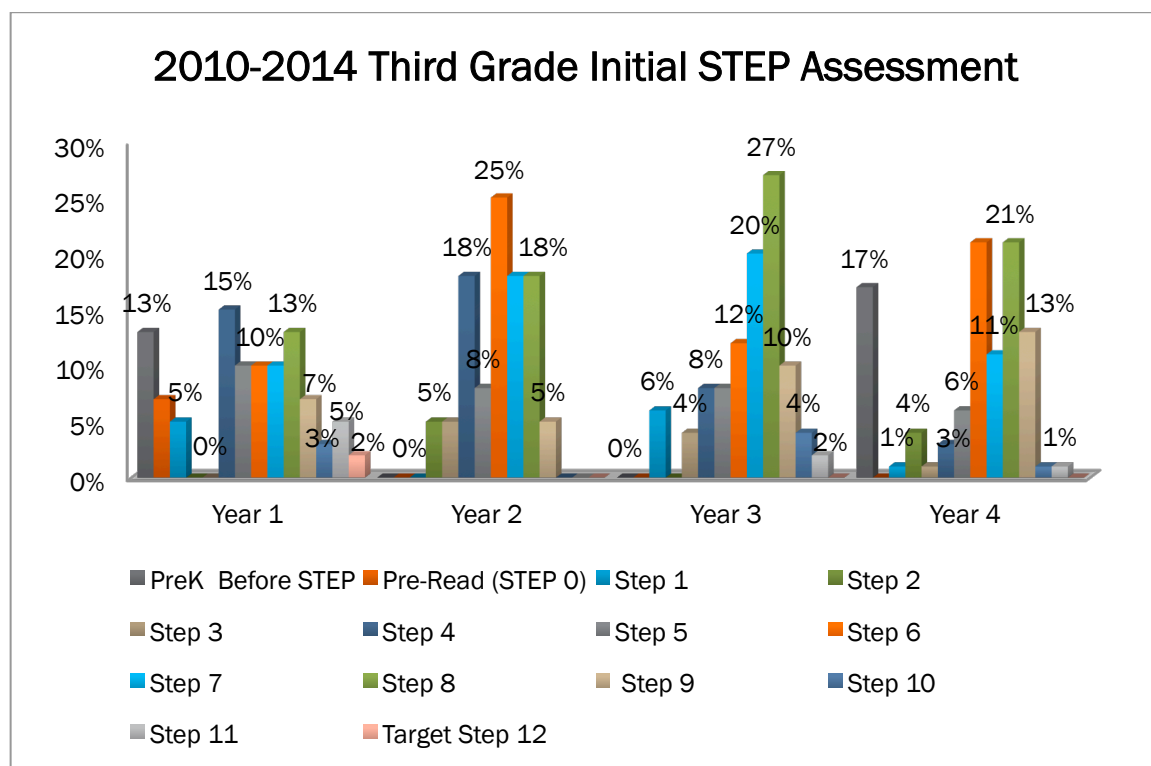
AY 2013–14 Initial and Final STEP Assessments for Grade 3 BRICK Avon Academy



Note. Source: adapted from BRICK Final Report 2013–14.

Figure 10.15

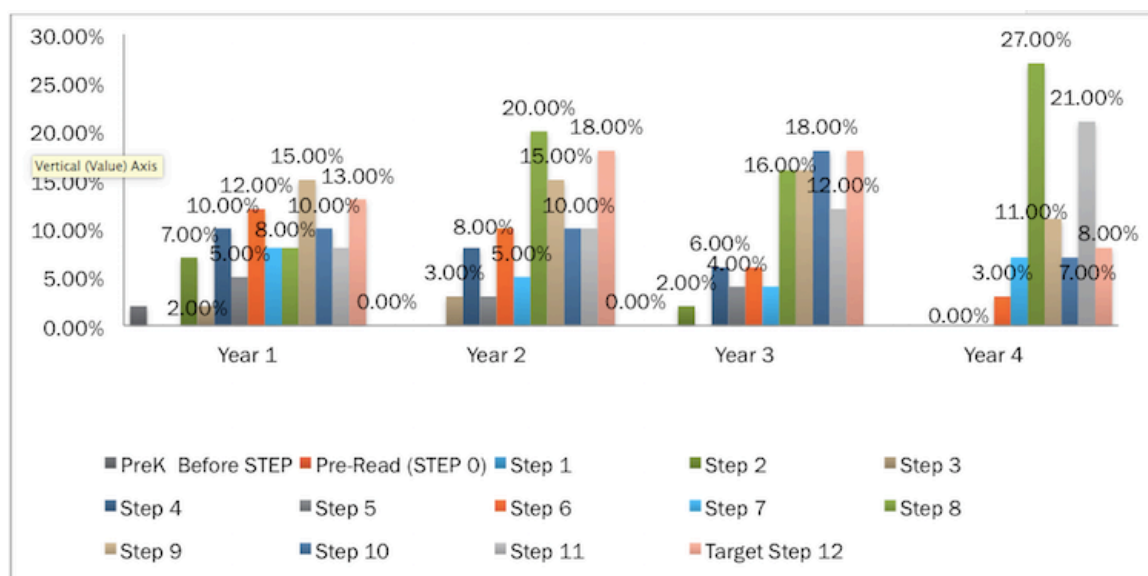
Initial Grade 3 STEP Assessment 2010–2014 at BRICK Avon Academy



Note. Source: adapted from BRICK Final Report 2013–14.

Figure 10.16

Final Grade 3 STEP Assessment 2010–2014 at BRICK Avon Academy



Note. Source: adapted from BRICK Final Report 2013–14.

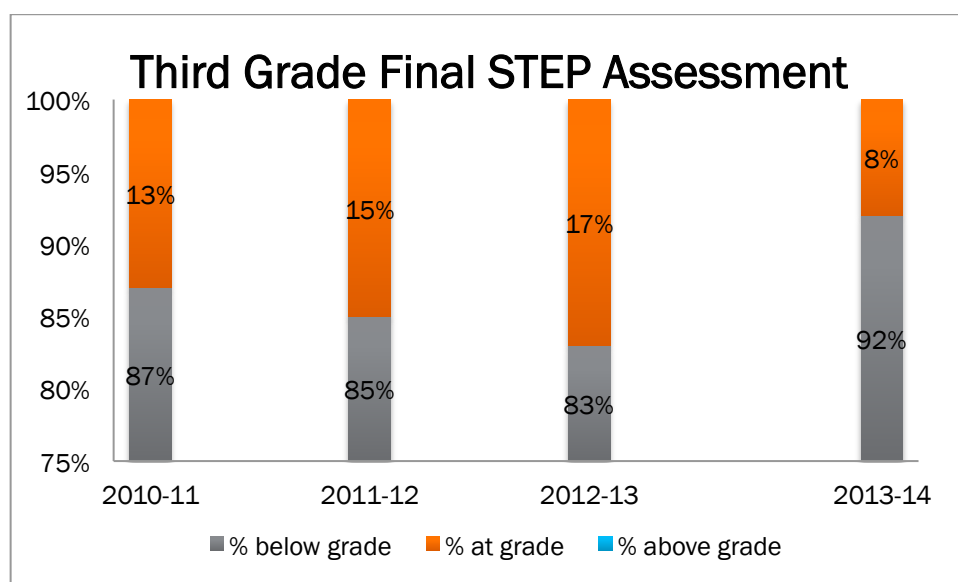
Figures 10.15 and 10.16 show the initial and final STEP scores for third graders at BRICK Avon over four years. Except for Year 3, initial STEP assessments showed 15–17% of students entered 3rd grade on or above level (STEPS 9–12) in reading.

Between 50–60% of entering third graders each year (Years 2–4) were assessed somewhere within second grade reading competency (STEPS 6–8).

A look at the final assessments of the third graders over 4 years at BRICK Avon Academy (Figure 10.16) shows steady improvement of students reaching full reading competency (STEP 12) by the end of the third grade, except for Year 4 (AY 2013–14), where many students (21%) tested just below competency on a STEP 11. Figure 10.17 shows the steady increase in third grade students who achieved the end of the year target, except in Year 4.

Figure 10.17

Final STEP Assessment for Grade 3 at BRICK Avon 2010–2014



Note. Source: BRICK Final Report 2013–14 and data in 2013–14 adapted from BRICK Avon data.

An Analysis of STEP Assessment Scores by Student Cohorts

Cohort #1

By taking the kindergarten class of 2011–12 and tracking their final STEP assessment scores each successive year, one can follow the progress made. Also, by third grade, most of the students are somewhere between a beginning of second grade competency (STEP 3) to approaching the third grade target (STEP 12).

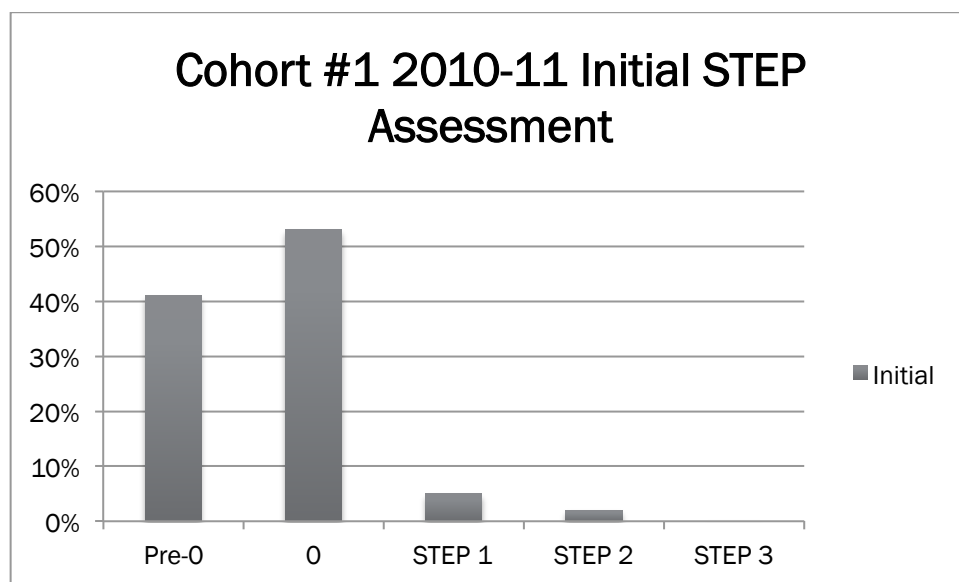
Table 10.5*Comparison Over Four (4) Years for Same Class Cohort to View Progress*

Final STEP Assessment	K 2010-2011	1st 2011-2012	2nd 2012-2013	3rd 2013-2014
# students	59	54	37	72* (73)
Pre-0	10%	0%	0%	0%
0	10%	0%	0%	0%
STEP 1	2%	0%	0%	0%
STEP 2	17%	13%	3%	0%
STEP 3	32%	13%	0%	3%
STEP 4	19%	24%	0%	0%
STEP 5	5%	28%	0%	6%
STEP 6	5%	15%	16%	3%
STEP 7		4%	11%	7%
STEP 8		4%	19%	27%
STEP 9			35%	11%
STEP 10			16%	7%
STEP 11				21%
STEP 12				8%

Note. Source: chart and analysis by researcher from school data; the bright green highlight shows the STEP Grade Level Target.

Figure 10.18

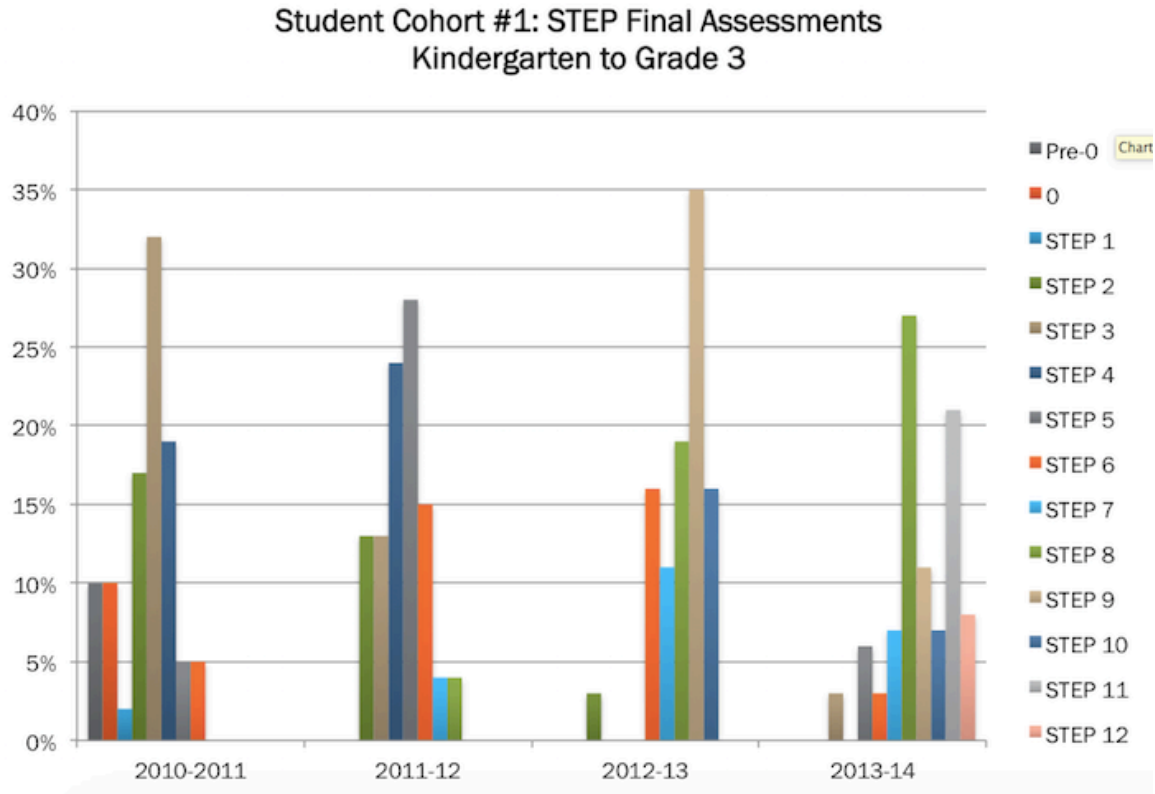
Cohort #1 2010–11 Initial STEP Assessment in Kindergarten



Note. Source: adapted from Figure 10.3.

Figure 10.19

Student Cohort #1 at BRICK Avon: STEP Final Assessments Over 4 Years From Kindergarten to Grade 3



Note. Source: BRICK Avon data.

While 8% of Cohort #1 students achieved the STEP 12 target by the final assessment in 3rd grade (Figure 10.19), 39% other students are on a STEP within the range of third grade competency, between STEP 9 and STEP 11, but have not yet achieved STEP 12. Additionally, 37% of the remaining students are still in the second grade competency range (between STEPS 6–9), placing them a year behind the target reading level. The remaining 10% of students are still in the first grade range reading levels (more than 2 grade levels behind).

Cohort #2

A second cohort and their year end STEP assessments can be tracked over three years, from kindergarten at BRICK Avon Academy through second grade.

Table 10.6

Comparison Over Three (3) Years for Same Class Cohort to View Progress

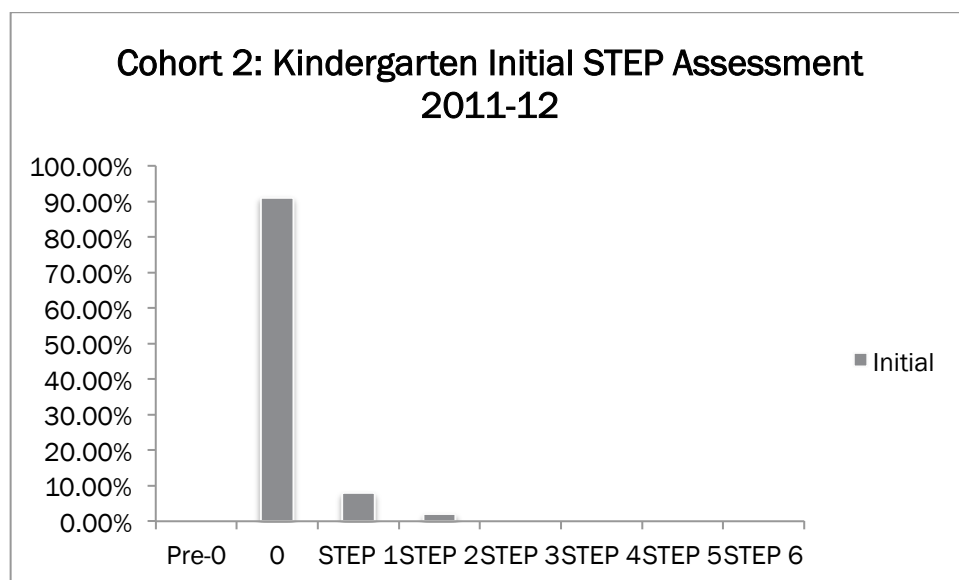
Final STEP Assessment	K 2011- 2012	1st 2012- 2013	2nd 2012- 2013
# students	66	54	37
Pre0	0%	0%	0%
0	11%	0%	0%
STEP 1	9%	0%	0%
STEP 2	24%	0%	3%
STEP 3	39%	19%	0%
STEP 4	11%	19%	0%
STEP 5	2%	37%	0%
STEP 6	5%	20%	16%
STEP 7		6%	11%
STEP 8			19%
STEP 9			35%
STEP 10			16%

Notie. Source: chart and analysis by researcher from BRICK Avon data.

Table 10.6 and Figure 10.21 show the second cohort of students across three years. The STEP assessments demonstrated an increased improvement in student reading outcomes each year. As shown in Figure 10.20, 91% of Cohort #2 students entered kindergarten at STEP 0, below grade level.

Figure 10.20

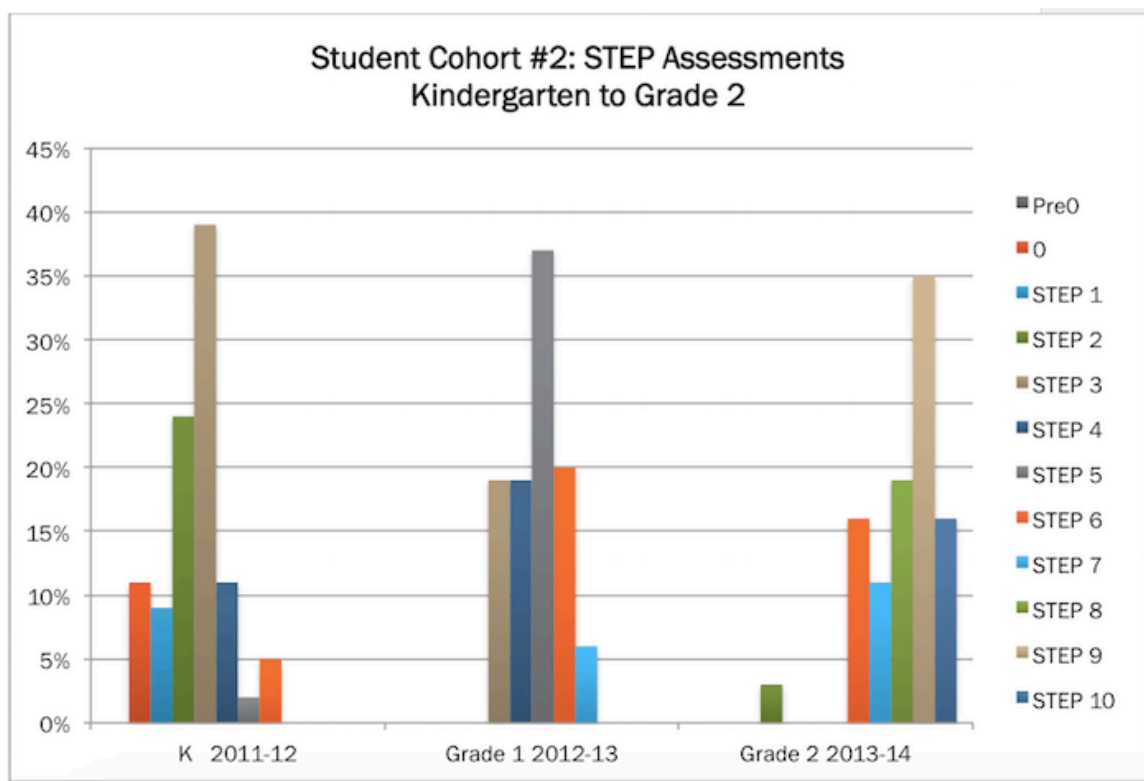
Cohort #2—Kindergarten Initial STEP Assessments in 2011–12 at BRICK Avon Academy



Note. Source: adapted from Figure 10.3.

Figure 10.21

Cohort #2—Final STEP Assessments Over Three Years at BRICK Avon



Note. Source: BRICK Avon data.

At end of their first year at BRICK Avon, STEP assessments (Figure 10.21) showed that 57% of the Cohort #2 kindergarten students were on or above grade level targets. Another 27% of the students were on STEP 2, within one STEP of their STEP 3 target for entering first grade. By the end of Grade 1, 27% of Cohort #2 students reached or exceeded their target for Grade 2 (STEP 6).

Another 37% of these students were on STEP 5, just one STEP below the target. By Year 3, 51% of the Cohort #2 students had met or exceeded the target (STEP 9) for the end of 2nd grade. Another 20% of the students were on STEP 8, within one STEP of being on grade level. Of the students who had not reached the target for third grade

reading level (STEP 9), 46% of the students were assessed as demonstrating somewhere within a second grade reading level range (STEPS 6–8).

Tracking by cohort over time demonstrates the unified focus of the BRICK Avon learning community—faculty, students, and parents— on reaching their reading comprehension skills as measured by the STEP assessments. It shows the focus of the faculty to support the students to acquire all-important reading skills. It also demonstrates the great challenges of BRICK’s goal to help all children to acquire grade level reading comprehension and skills by the end of the third grade.

Because of the high student transiency rate at BRICK Avon, tracking by cohort does not necessarily mean tracking the same students over several years. However, it still offers a comparison worth examining.

Cohort #3

Student Cohort #3 began kindergarten at BRICK Avon in the fall of 2012–13. The cohort’s initial STEP test showed 92% of them at STEP 0 or below (see Figure 10.3). Only 8% began kindergarten at STEP 1 or STEP 2.

Table 10.7

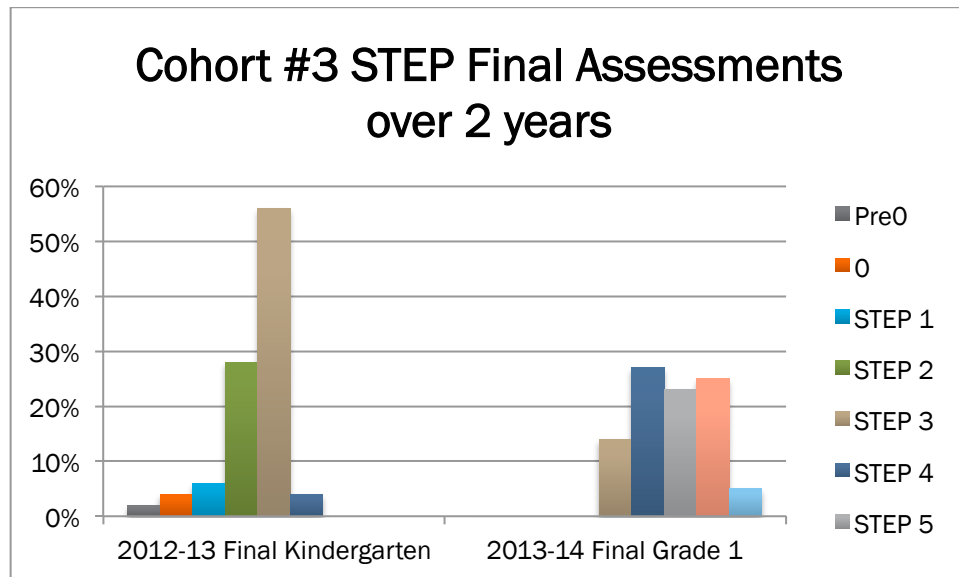
Comparison Over Two (2) Years for Same Class Cohort to View Progress

Final STEP Assessment	K 2012– 2013	1 2013– 2014
# students	50	64
Pre0	2%	0%
0	4%	0%
STEP 1	6%	0%
STEP 2	28%	6%
STEP 3	56%	14%
STEP 4	4%	27%
STEP 5		23%
STEP 6		25%
STEP 7		5%

Note. Source: chart and analysis by researcher from school data.

Figure 10.22

2012–13 and 2013–14 Final STEP Assessment for Cohort #3 at BRICK Avon



Note. Source: adapted from BRICK data reported in 2013–14 BRICK Annual Report.

STEP 3 is the year-end target for K, and STEP 6 is the year-end target for Grade 1.

Cohort #3 shows similar progress to the other cohorts in their final STEP assessments, with 60% of the students reaching or exceeding their target (STEP 3) at the end of kindergarten, and another 28% reaching STEP 2, just one STEP below the end of year goal. By the end of Grade 1, 30% of this cohort of students had reached or exceeded the target (STEP 6). All but 6% of this cohort were reading somewhere within the range of a Grade 1 reading level (STEPS 3–5 and beyond) by the end of the year.

At least one of the teachers said in her interview that much of the strength of STEP is the support and understanding STEP gave to teachers about HOW to effectively teach reading and how to appropriately support each student with their reading comprehension skills with differentiated instruction based upon specific individual student need, as pinpointed in the STEP assessments.

Cumulative Student Achievement Outcomes 2010–2014 as Measured on the Annual New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK)

BRICK Avon Academy Learning and Achievement Outcomes: BRICK announced progress based upon NJASK results by end of 2013–14 (end of 4th year).

From pre–BRICK to 2013–14, overall school math proficiency on the NJASK had *increased* growing from 22% to 43%:

- 3rd grade math proficiency had increased from 45% of students who tested on or above grade level pre–BRICK to 61% of students testing on or above grade level (Figure 10.29)
- 4th grade math proficiency had increased from 27% to 57% on or above grade level (Figure 10.30)
- 5th grade math proficiency increased from 21% to 56% (Figure 10.31)

- 6th grade math proficiency increased from 29% to 49% on or above grade level (Figure 10.32)
- 7th and 8th grade math proficiency did not show much increase over four years on the NJASK test (Figures 10.33 and 10.34)

Overall, Literacy and Language Arts proficiency as measured on the NJ ASK from pre-BRICK to AY2013–14 at BRICK Avon showed much less gains:

- 3rd grade ELA proficiency more than doubled from 19% to 47% on or above grade level (Figure 10.23)
- 5th grade increased from 10% to 20% on or above grade level (still very low) (Figure 10.25)
- 8th grade increased from 28% to 38% on or above grade level (Figure 10.30)
- NJ ASK scores for Language Arts in the other grades did not increase much over five years (Figures 10.24, 10.26, 10.27, and 10.28)

Below Figures 10.23 to 10.36 show the results of the NJASK scores from the NJ DOE School Report Cards for BRICK Avon Academy for the years AY 2012–13 and 2013–14 in both literacy and language arts, and math. These report cards show results for the NJASK from Grade 3–Grade 8, with scores traced from AY 2009–10 (pre-BRICK) to AY 2013–14. The scores and progress over years are in graph form, and show each grade first by literacy and language (LAL) scores; and then grade by grade by math results.

The literacy scores are less than definitive. However, on a hopeful note, that first group of students who would have been in kindergarten in the first BRICK year (AY

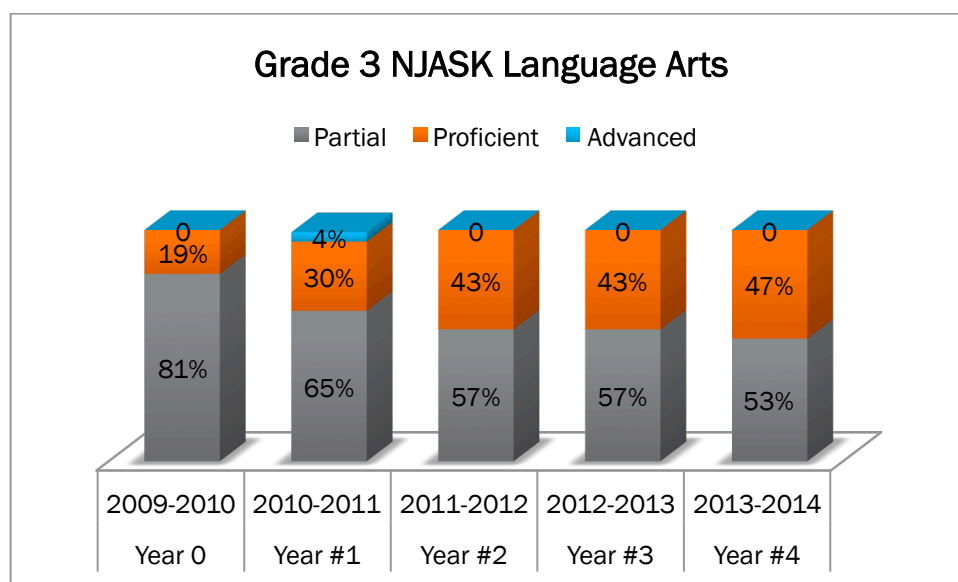
2010–11) would have been in the third grade by 2013–14. The NJASK scores for third grade literacy on the NJ ASK in 2013–14 was 47% proficient (Figure 10.23). While this may not be as high a proficient rate as one would hope to see in comparison with the NJ state average for third graders, this is a huge increase in proficiency from the 19% of 3rd graders scoring proficient in the year prior to BRICK’s entry to the scores of the cohort of students who entered kindergarten in BRICK’s first year at BAA. Those students benefitted from the STEP assessments and related literacy strategies employed by BAA teachers. Additionally, the third grade math scores for the same year (Figure 10.29) were at 61% total proficiency and advanced proficiency (19% advanced proficiency), compared with a total 45% proficiency and advanced proficiency for third graders the year prior to BRICK’s arrival. Because the math testing involves reading word problems, reading factors into math scores as well and would reflect on the students’ reading abilities. It becomes difficult to track the cohorts by state standardized testing after 2013–14 because of the change in New Jersey from the NJASK to the PARCC test, as well as because of the absence of scores posted for some grade levels on the NJ DOE School Report Card after 2013–14. With an absence of state recorded scores over the years for some grades, especially for Grade 5, and the dismal language arts score for that grade in 2012–12 in Figure 10.25 (11% proficient), the NJASK scores make it difficult to track cohorts across the years in literacy scores.

NJ State Report card data for fourth grade LAL Avon (Figure 10.24) shows that in Year 1, BRICK Avon fourth graders nearly doubled their proficiency, (but still only 17%). By the second and third year of BRICK’s implementation, 28% of the current fourth graders scored as proficient or advanced. While these were different students each

successive year, and while the scores were still not where the BRICK community wanted them to be, the marked improvement for the 4th graders on the annual standardized NJ ASK test was undeniable for Years 2 and 3. They seem to have lost ground again in Year 4.

Figure 10.23

Grades 3 Language Arts Literacy Scores NJ ASK for 2009–10 Through 2013–14 .

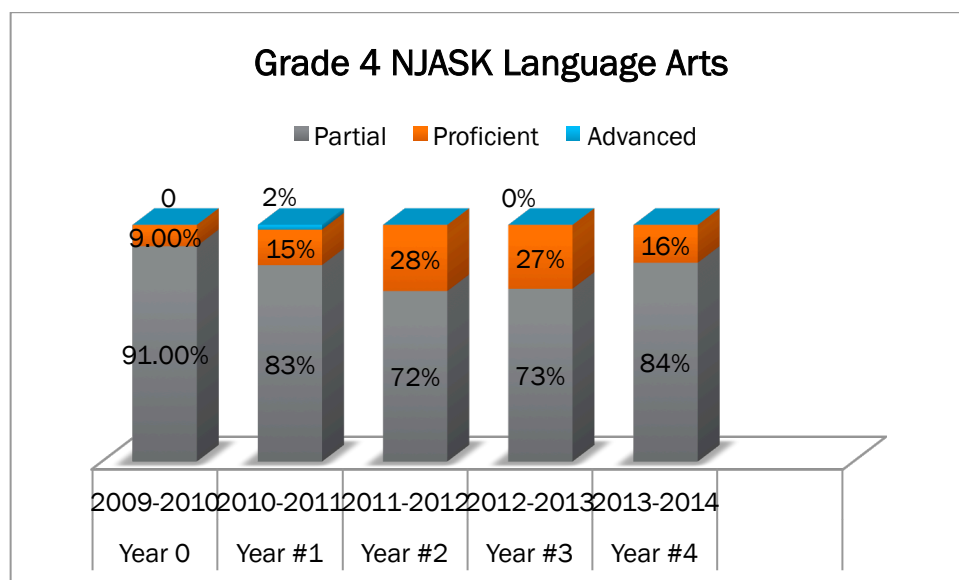


Note. Source: adapted from NJ DOE School Report Card.

Figure 10.23 shows steady gains by successive years of BRICK Avon 3rd graders for outcomes on NJ ASK Language Arts. Figure 10.24 shows more modest outcomes for the 4th graders.

Figure 10.24

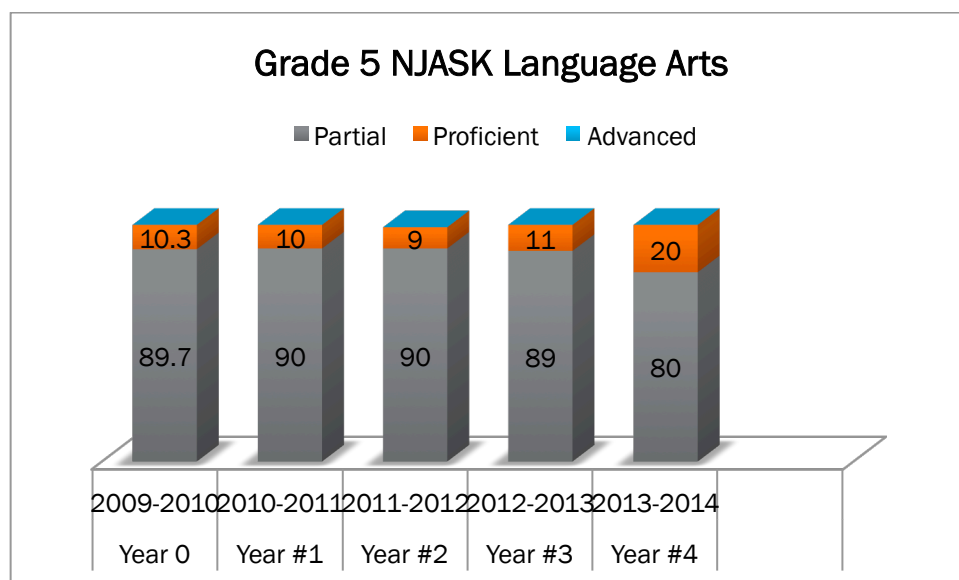
Grades 4 Language Arts Literacy Scores NJ ASK for 2009–10 Through 2013–14



Note. Source: adapted from NJ DOE School Report Card.

Figure 10.25

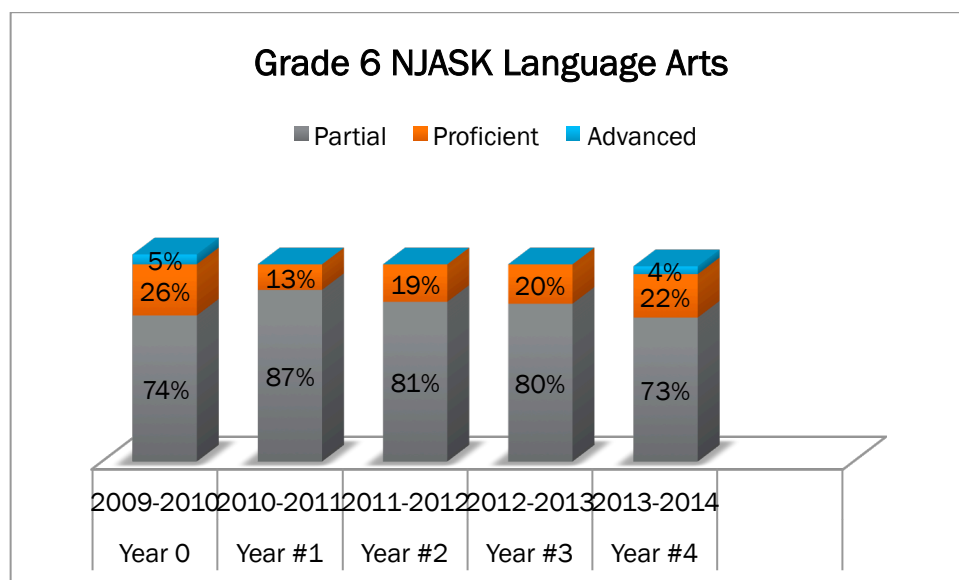
Grades 5 Language Arts Literacy Scores NJ ASK for 2009–10 Through 2013–14



Note. Source: adapted from NJ DOE School Report Card.

Figure 10.26

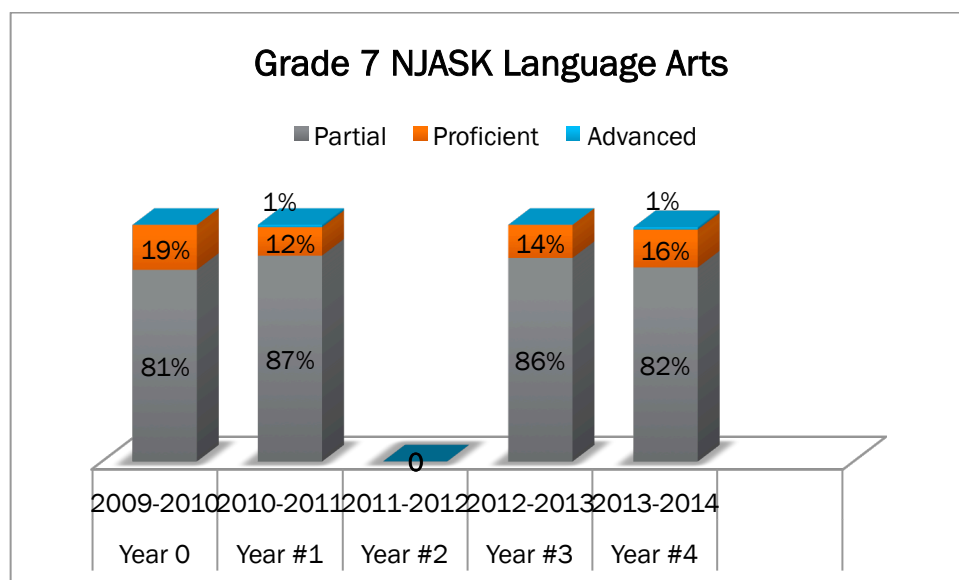
Grades 6 Language Arts Literacy Scores NJ ASK for 2009–10 Through 2013–14



Note. Source: adapted from NJ DOE School Report Card.

Figure 10.27

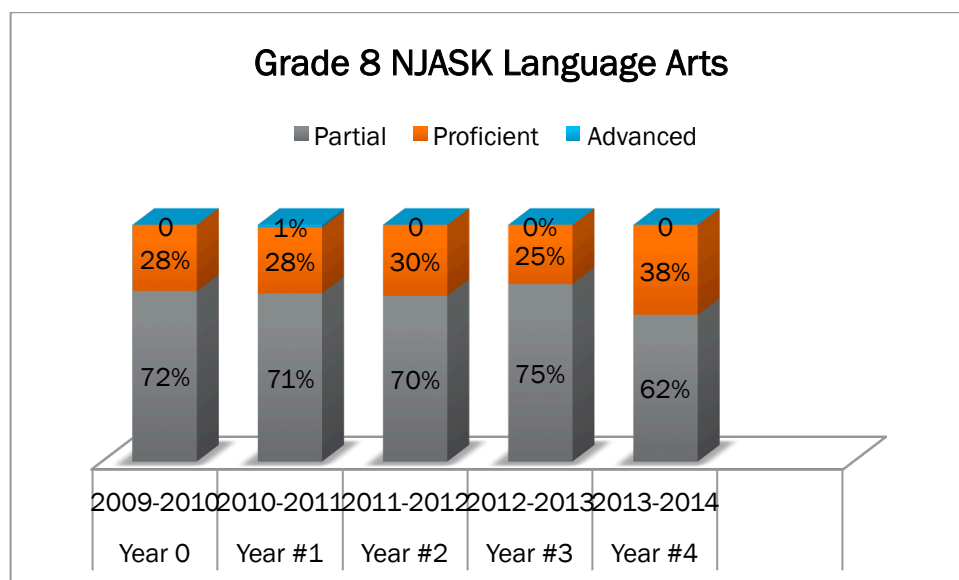
Grades 7 Language Arts Literacy Scores NJ ASK for 2009–10 Through 2013–14



Note. Source: adapted from NJ DOE School Report Card.

Figure 10.28

Grades 8 Language Arts Literacy Scores NJ ASK for 2009–10 Through 2013–14

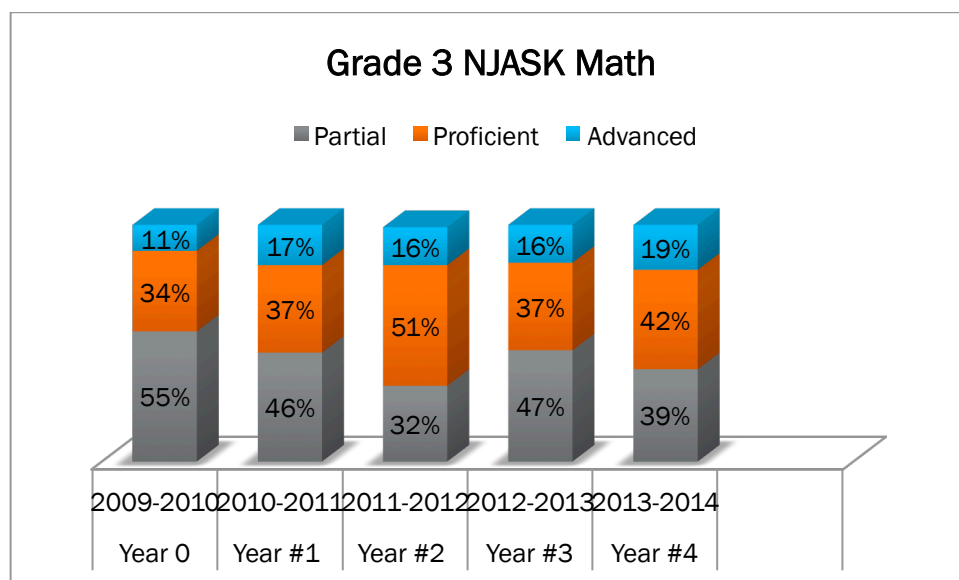


Note. Source: adapted from NJ DOE School Report Card.

Figures 10.25, 10.26 and 10.27 show little change on outcomes for grades 5 through 7, and Figure 10.28 shows modest gain of an overall 10% increase in scores for the last year for 8th graders in the Language Arts.

Figure 10.29

Grade 3 Math Scores from the NJ ASK for 2009–10 Through 2013–14

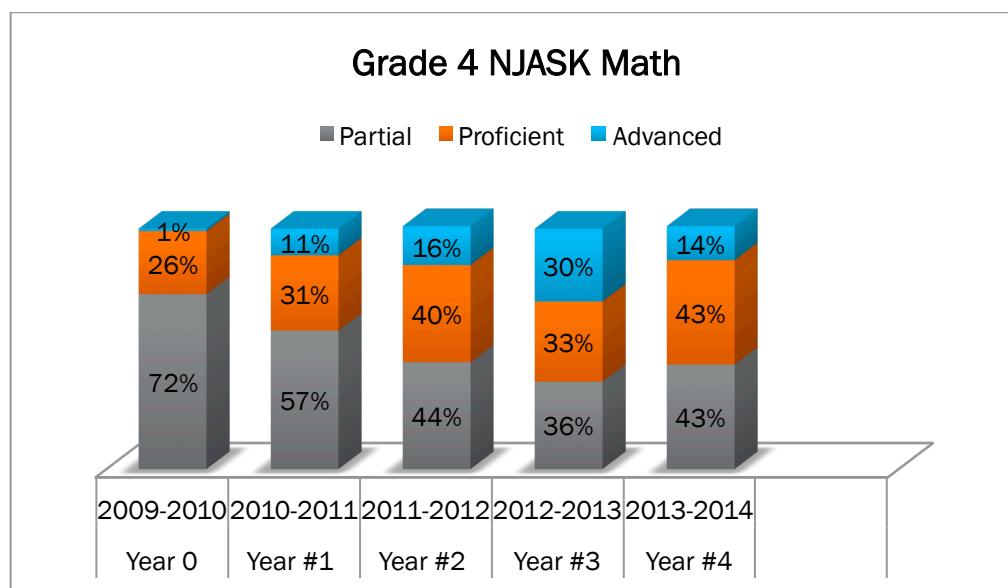


Note. Source: adapted from NJ DOE School Report Card.

Math scores show a more positive outcomes over four years for grades 3–6 (Figures 10.29, 10.30, 10.31, and 10.32).

Figure 10.30

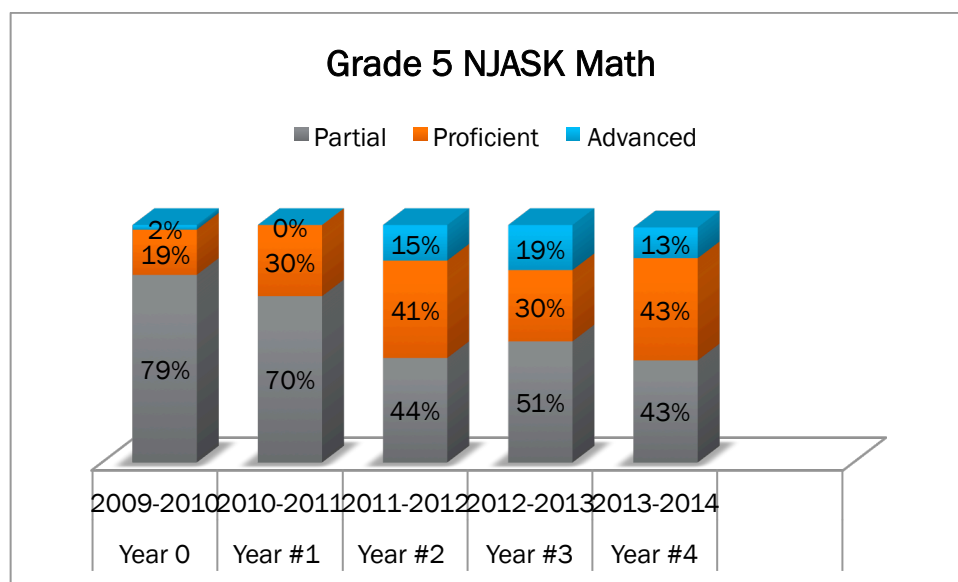
Grade 4 Math Scores from the NJ ASK for 2009–10 Through 2013–14



Note. Source: adapted from NJ DOE School Report Card.

Figure 10.31

Grade 5 Math Scores from the NJ ASK for 2009–10 Through 2013–14

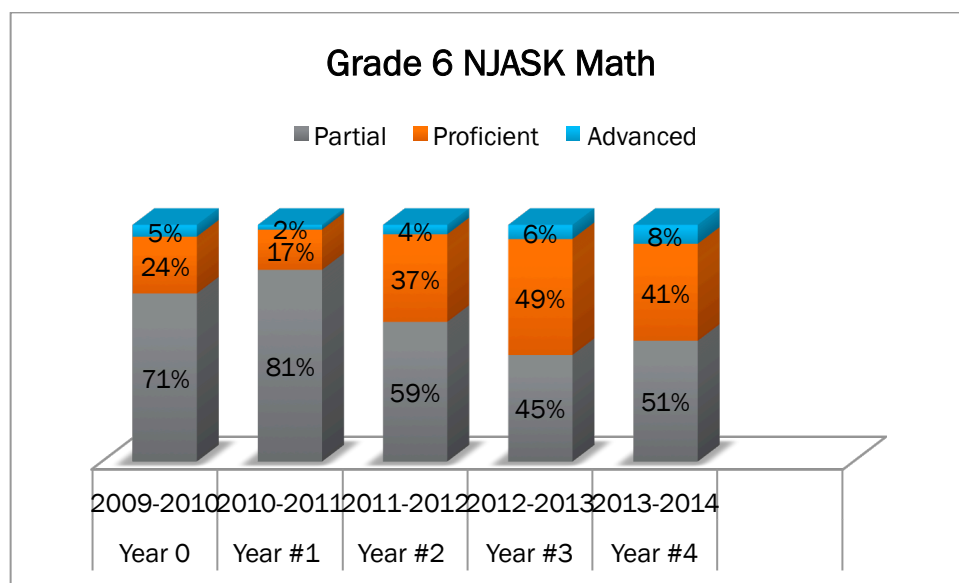


Note. Source: adapted from NJ DOE School Report Card.

Grade 5 outcomes in math more than doubled over five years (Figure 10.31), as did Grade 6 math outcomes (Figure 10.32).

Figure 10.32

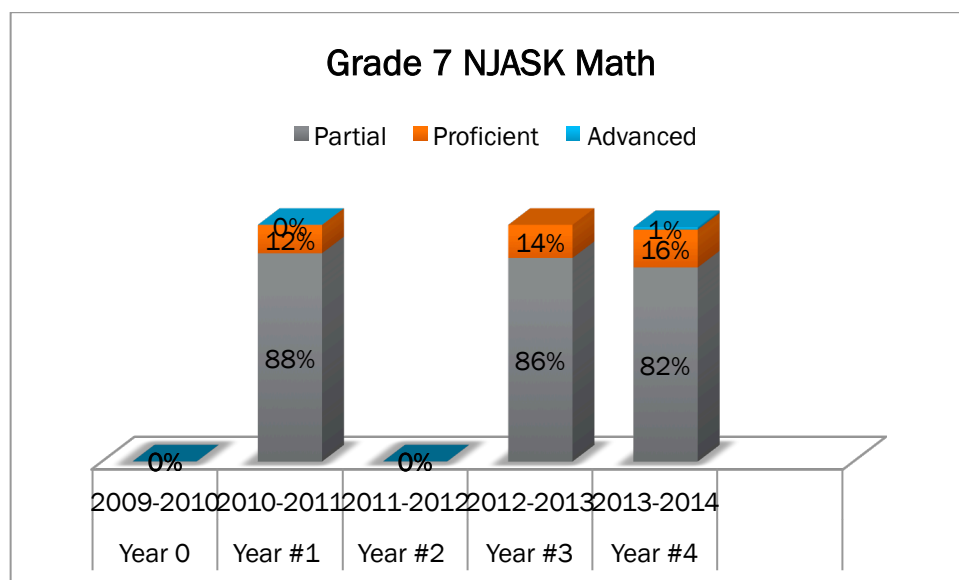
Grade 6 Math Scores from the NJ ASK for 2009–10 Through 2013–14



Note. Source: adapted from NJ DOE School Report Card.

Figure 10.33

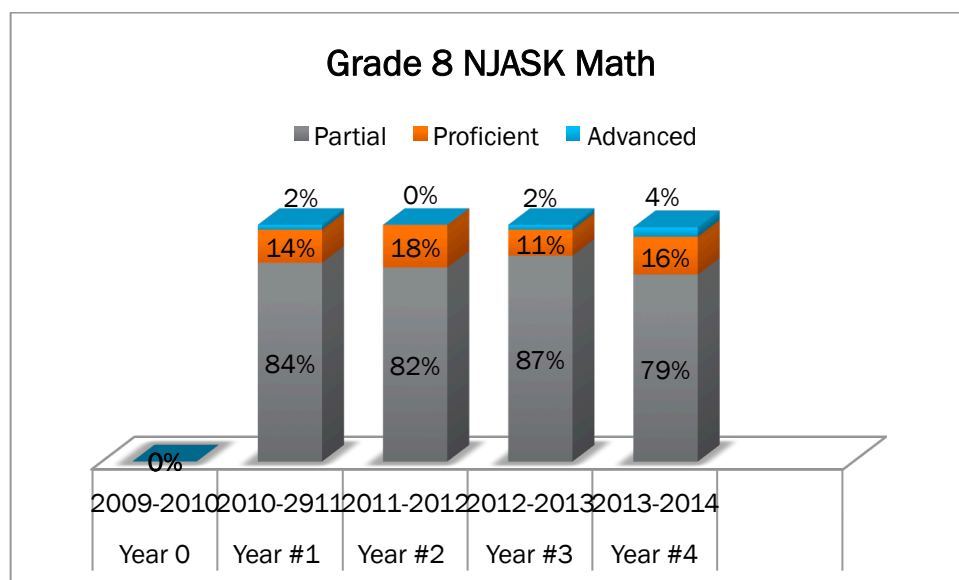
Grade 7 Math Scores from the NJ ASK for 2009–10 Through 2013–14



Note. Source: adapted from NJ DOE School Report Card.

Figure 10.34

Grade 8 Math Scores from the NJ ASK for 2009–10 Through 2013–14

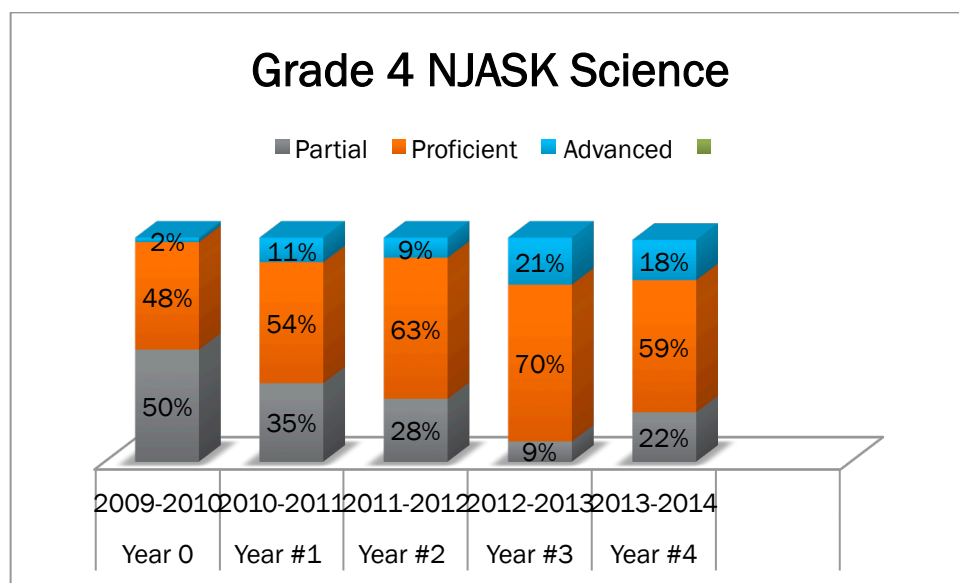


Note. Source: adapted from NJ DOE School Report Card.

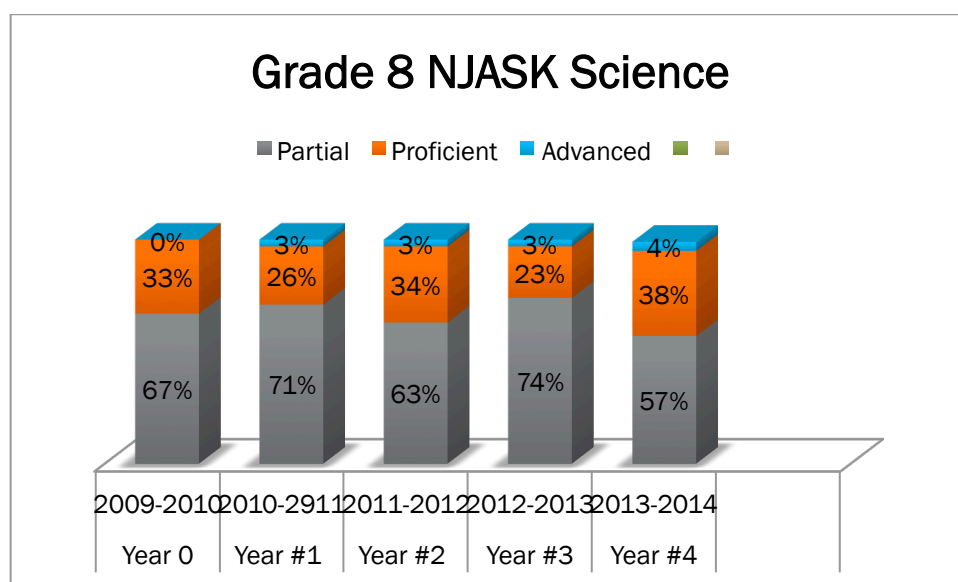
Grade 7 and 8 math outcomes were fairly flat and dismal (Figures 10.31 and 10.32).

Figure 10.35

Grade 4 Scores from the NJ ASK for 2009–10 Through 2013–14



Note. Source: adapted from NJ DOE School Report Card.

Figure 10.36*Grade 8 Scores from the NJ ASK for 2009–10 Through 2013–14*

Note. Source: adapted from NJ DOE School Report Card.

By looking at Figures 10.29 to 10.34, we see the overall progress for each Academic Year of BRICK in the student math scores in the third through the sixth grades during BRICK's first four years at the school. The third grade shows progress across the years in math, with a slight decrease in progress for students in AY 2012–13, from 67% to 53% proficient or advanced proficient. All years under BRICK implementation in Grade 3 show on or above grade level at more than 50% of the students (up from 45% pre-BRICK). Fourth grade shows steady progress in increased proficiency in math on the standardized tests over the three years of BRICK, with 63% of the AY 2012–13 cohort testing on or above proficiency. Fifth grade shows steady progress in state test scores over the three years of BRICK, with a little decrease in scores for the AY 2012–13 cohort. Sixth graders show steady increases in the scores of each cohort with the AY 2012–13 showing the most increase with 55% scoring at or above proficiency.

For whatever reason, 7th and 8th grade math scores are disappointing. Figures 10.32 through 10.37 show Grades 3–8 math scores NJ ASK for 2012–13 adapted from the NJ DOE School Report Card. Math scores show marked improvement during BRICK's tenure. Math scores for most of the grades increased dramatically each year. Furthermore, by BRICK's third year, the school was meeting the NJ state targets for Math.

The 4th graders at BRICK had always done well on the NJ ASK exam, but by the third year of BRICK, 91% of the 4th graders were scoring proficient on the science portion of the NJ ASK (Figure 10.37), as were 42% of 8th graders (Figure 10.38).

Increases and progress at BRICK Avon over four years were more noticeable in math scores on the standardized NJ ASK test. By tracking the progress of a cohort of students in math scores over four years, it is possible to follow one group of students vs. different groups from year to year, and to see how they might have progressed over time. Table 10.8 and Figure 10.37 show a steady increase each year in those students in this cohort who tested on or above proficiency level in math, (although the percentage of students testing above proficient in the last year did not sustain the increasing trend in these scores). The overall increase in math proficiency for this cohort of students diminished somewhat each year after the 4th grade. Perhaps since BRICK began with a focus on the early grades, it might be more pertinent to examine a similar student cohort which began in kindergarten or first grade at BRICK to see their outcomes from Grades 3–6 on the standardized tests like NJ ASK or the Common Core (2014 forward).

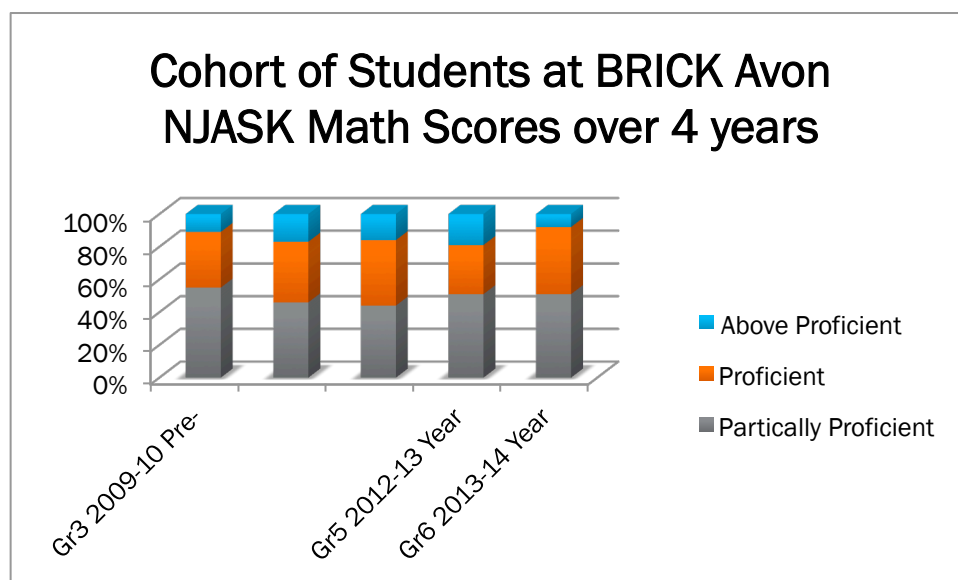
Table 10.8*Tracing a Class Cohort Across Four Years*

NJ ASK Math	Gr 3 2009-10 Pre-BRICK	Gr3 2010-11 Year 1 BRICK	GR4 2011-12 Year 2 BRICK	Gr 5 2012-13 Year 3 BRICK	Gr 6 2013-14 Year 4 BRICK
Above Proficient	11%	17%	16%	19%	8%
Proficient	34%	37%	40%	30%	41%
Partially Proficient	55%	46%	44%	51%	51%
% TARGET or Above	45%	54%	56%	49%	49%

Note. Source: adapted from NJ DOE School Report Card; MATH NJ ASK data.

Figure 10.37

Tracking NJ ASK Math Scores for a Cohort of Students at BRICK Avon Over 4 years



Note. Source: adapted from NJ DOE School Report Card for 2012–13 and 2013–14.

Having observed in the school intensively in 2012–13, the researcher suggested that dip in grade level scores in certain grades in this year may have something to do with the strength of the teachers in certain grades for the years being examined, and also with the strength of grade level teams. Student transiency is also a factor in tracing any student cohort from year to year.

As previously examined, Figure 10.23 shows that Literacy and Language (LAL) scores for successive groups of third graders at BAA more than doubled from pre-BRICK to BRICK Year 3 (AY 2012–13). It is not possible, however, to track a cohort of students from 3rd grade to 6th grade in order to show a sustained percentage of LAL proficiency over successive years.

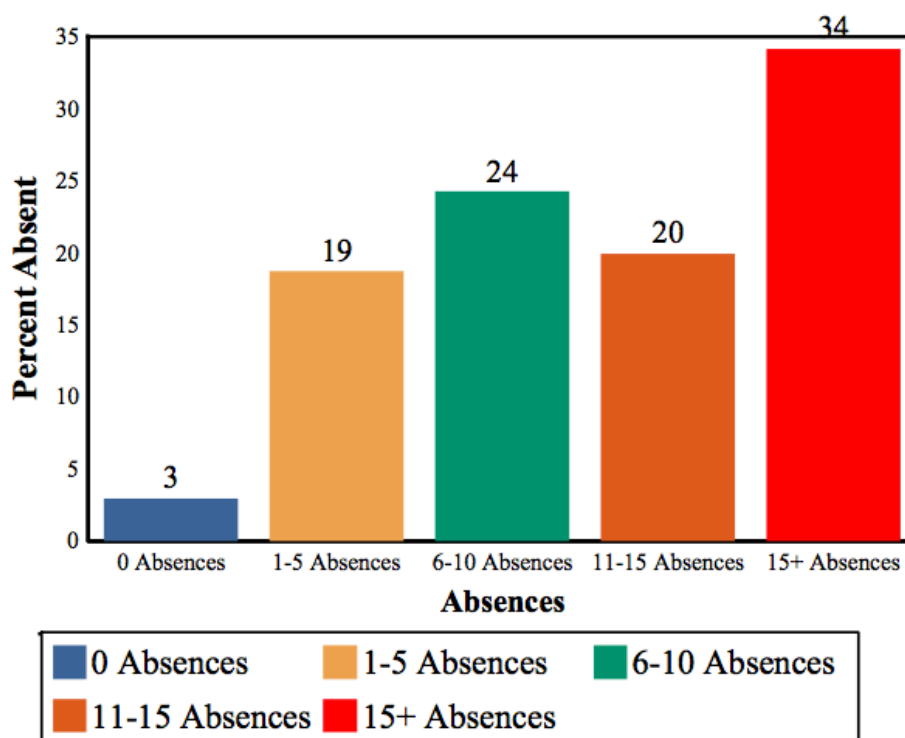
Chronic Absenteeism

Included from the NJ DOE School Report Card in 2012–13 is a bar graph regarding attendance (Figure 10.38). In AY 2012–13 year, the state of NJ and the Newark district began to measure and focus on chronic absenteeism. Besides a high (30–40%) student transiency rate at BAA, chronic absenteeism was also very high at BAA. This could be both a reflection of the economic instability of families, as well as a potential correlate for lower student proficiency and academic achievement. In 2012–12, 34% of BAA students were absent 15 days or more during the school year.

Figure 10.38*Chronic Student Absenteeism at BRICK Avon Academy*

Absenteeism

The chart below presents the percentage of students who were absent in each category of absence: 0 absences, 1- 5 absences, 6 - 10 absences, 11 - 15 absences, and more than 15 absences. An absence is defined as being ‘not present’ and includes the days missed regardless of whether they were determined to be excused or unexcused by the school.



Note. Source: NJ DOE School Report Card 2013–14.

The Newark District and the schools began to focus upon reducing the rates of chronic student absenteeism in AY 2013–14 and forward as a strategy for raising student learning outcomes.

Student Transience and Mobility at BRICK Avon

Table 10.9

Mobility Analysis at BRICK Avon Ave School

	<u>2010-11</u>	<u>2011-12</u>	<u>2012-13</u>	<u>2013-14</u>
Total Enrollment End of Prior Year	613	628	576	579
Prior Year Graduating 8th Graders	(77)	(104)	(83)	(68)
New Students - Beginning of Year				
New Kindergarten Students	60	56	56	65
New 6th Grade Students	46	33	27	42
Other New Students				
Over Summer/Sept.	83	67	103	122
During Rest of Year	102	104	105	78
Total New Students	291	260	291	307
Student Losses				
Over Summer/Sept.	(89)	(109)	(106)	(106)
During Rest of Year	(107)	(99)	(96)	(107)
Total Student Losses	(196)	(208)	(202)	(213)
Unidentified Difference	(3)	--	(3)	1
Enrollment - End of Year	<u>628</u>	<u>576</u>	<u>579</u>	<u>606</u>
	631	576	582	605
Student Losses as a Percent of Enrollment - End of Prior Year	<u>-32%</u>	<u>-33%</u>	<u>-35%</u>	<u>-37%</u>

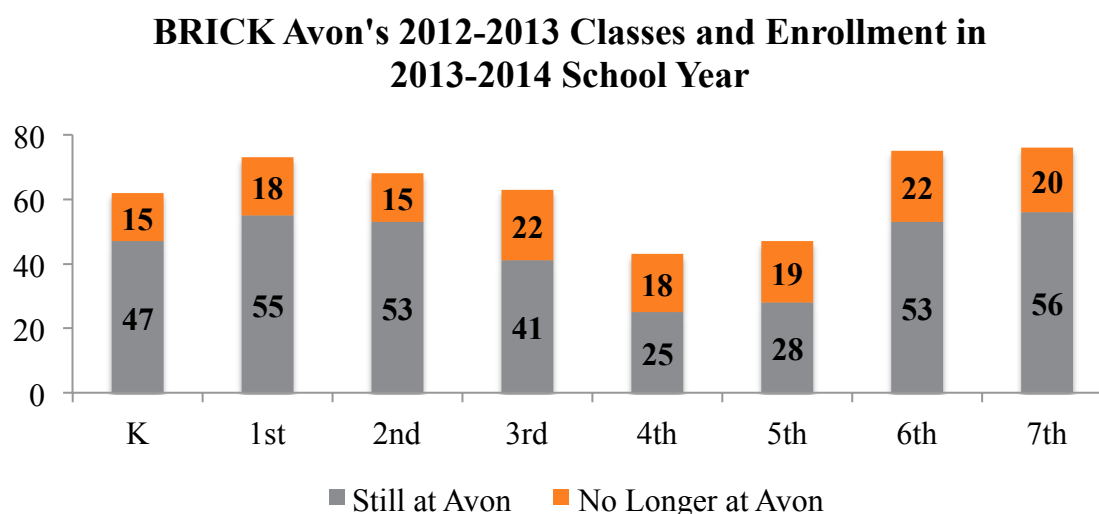
Note. Source: BRICK reports 2015 generated from NPS Power Schools by BRICK.

Transience: From Researcher Observation and Data

Student transience at BAA ran between 30–35% per school year, and it presented a tremendous challenge to the entire BAA community. Table 10.9, Figure 10.39, and the following data tracking students is drawn from a BRICK report based on data from PowerSchool data. It is inserted here to give the reader a sense of the magnitude of the challenge.

Where Students Went after the 2012–2013 School Year:

- At the end of the 2012–2013 school year, 507 students were enrolled in grades K–7 at BRICK Avon.
- At the start of the 2013–2014 school year, 358 of these 507 students still attended school at BRICK Avon.
 - This loss of 149 students represents a 29% decrease.
 - Despite this loss of 149 students, as of April 1st 2014, BRICK Avon had a student body enrollment for grades K–7 of 545 students.
- BRICK Avon’s 4th Grade class had the largest reduction, losing 42% of students from the previous year.
- BRICK Avon’s 2nd Grade class had the largest retention of students and 78% of the 2012–2013 class enrolled at the school in 2013–2014.

Figure 10.39*BRICK Avon's 2012–13 Classes and Enrollment in 2013–2014*

Note. Source: derived by BRICK from Newark Public Schools generated PowerSchool report.

BRICK Avon Students that Started Enrollment After September 2013

According to PowerSchool reports (information from BAA), between October 1st, 2013 and May 27th, 2014, BRICK Avon had 75 students start enrollment mid school year.

- Of these 75 mid year enrollment students, 51 submitted enrollment paperwork to Avon's office
- Of these 75, 34 transferred from either a district or charter school located in Newark NJ, and
 - 16 transferred from another NJ district
 - 14 transferred from another state or country
 - 11 students did not submit enrollment paperwork and previous enrollment information could not be found in PowerSchool
- Of the 34 students that previously attended a school in Newark (regardless of charter or district), 28 attended an NPS School and 6 attended a charter

- The 28 NPS transfers attended 18 different district schools
- The 6 charter transfers attended 4 different charter schools
- From the 75 students that started enrollment mid year at BRICK Avon, 63 were still enrolled at the school as of 5/27/14

Basically, what this information and analysis documents is the large transiency rate for students at BRICK Avon Academy. It underscores the difficulty for teachers and the entire BAA community in having to relate to (academically and socially) and support a constantly changing student and parent community throughout the academic year.

Summary of Chapter

STEP

The use of the STEP program at BRICK for grades K–3 offered teachers a way to assess individual student reading levels and details about specific comprehension skills students needed for mastery. This helped teachers plan differentiated instruction. STEP also provided a set of goals for reading acquisition goals that students and parents could also understand and strive to reach (especially when paired with incentives for students).

Initial STEP assessments at the beginning of each year reveal exceptionally low reading skills of students. Through a combination of collaborative assessment analysis; teacher development and support for using STEP effectively; instructional planning; and differentiated small group instruction, student reading comprehension skills rose dramatically by the end of each year for measurable progress. Even the students who did not reach their goal generally raised their reading comprehension STEP to within a year of their target grade level, despite beginning several levels below their grade.

The NJ ASK standardized test scores for grades 3–8 also show some progress

over four years. The high rate of student transience and chronic absenteeism at BRICK Avon and the underlying causes affiliated with extreme poverty certainly made the challenge of raising standardized test scores more difficult for the teachers.

NJ ASK Language Arts and Literacy

In language arts and literacy (LAL), there was a 58% increase in student proficiency from pre-BRICK to end of year one (2010–2011). There was a 43% increase in students scoring proficient from Year 1 to Year 2 at BRICK Avon. The proficiency rate stayed the same from Year 2 to Year 3, and then increased 9% in Year 4.

Grade 4 LAL scores showed dramatic increases on the NJ ASK from Year 1 to Year 2 (67% increase), and from Year 2 to Year 3 (87%) increase, and then proficiency scores declined for Year 3 (1%) and 4 (40%).

Scores for LAL proficiency for grades 5–8 do not show as much progress from year to year.

NJ ASK Math

Increases in math proficiency scores were notable.

Grade 3 students scoring proficient increased 54% from pre-BRICK to Year 1: 24% from Year 1 to 2; 20% from Year 2 to 3; and, 23% increase from Year 3 to Year 4. Sixty-one percent of 3rd graders scored proficient or above in the AY 2013–14 year, up from 35% pre-BRICK (a 96% increase).

Grade 4 student scoring proficient increased 55% from pre-BRICK to Year 1; 33% increase from Year 1 to Year 2; 18% increase at the end of Year 3, and then a

decrease of 16% in the 4th year. Even so, there was student proficiency increased from pre-BRICK to Year 4 by 110%.

Grade 5 proficiency scores increased 43% from pre-BRICK to Year 1; 87% increase from Year 1 to Year 2; a 16% decrease from Year 2 to 3; and then a 27% increase from Year 3 to Year 4. From pre-BRICK to Year 4, 5th grade proficiency scores increased by 160%.

Sixth grade students decreased proficiency rate from pre-BRICK to the first year of BRICK. However, from Year 1 to Year 2, students scoring proficient increased by 116%. From Year 3 to Year 4, students scoring proficient increased again by 34%, but dropped by 10% in Year 4. From the first year of BRICK to Year 4, there was a 158% increase in students scoring proficient in math.

The standardized scores have severe limitations in their ability to accurately reflect student progress over time since each year is a different group of students. Therefore, comparing one group of fourth graders to the next year's group of fourth graders is like comparing apples to oranges. This is even more so at BRICK Avon, given the high rates of student transiency. Nevertheless, there was substantial progress in student scores and proficiency over time at BRICK Avon. The school went from having the second worst scores in the city prior to BRICK to showing much stronger progress in student growth.

The student transience rate at BRICK Avon remained very high (generally between 30–35%) and provided an additional challenge to the BRICK faculty. Chronic student absenteeism was also very high. This was an issue that the staff at BRICK Avon

would develop strategies designed to reduce the chronic absenteeism rate in coming years.

Chapter 11

Survey Findings Perceptions of BAA Teachers, Staff, Parents and Administrators Year 3 (AY 2012–13) and Year 4 (AY2013–14)

Introduction to Survey Findings

Findings presented in this chapter were drawn from three surveys were administered by the researcher at the school in February, 2013 (during AY 2012–13, BRICK Year 3) to three groups at BAA: teachers, staff, and parents. All surveys were approved by IRB as a part of the present study. Each survey took about 15 minutes to complete. The researcher followed up with many of the teachers and staff members personally to ask if they had completed and turned in the survey. There was no material incentive for completing the survey. However, a “thank you” luncheon (sandwiches and fresh fruit) was provided at the end of the year/ study for all staff in the teachers’ room.

Findings: Teacher Survey

The survey was conducted at BRICK Avon Avenue School with grade level teachers (and Special Education teachers), special teachers (visual art, music, physical education, language) and intervention and support teachers. The surveys were anonymous. The survey design was kept as close as possible to the Year 1 survey (Appendix B), as both utilized questions from key areas of the Chicago Collaborative surveys for teachers and parents (Bryk et al., 2010). Twenty-eight (28) out of thirty-eight (38) teacher surveys were completed and returned. This represented a 74% response rate.

Survey respondents (N=28) were 25% male (N=7) and 68% female (N=19) (7% no gender indicated). Respondents self-identified as 36% African American, 21% Hispanic, 14% white (7% no response). Sixty-one percent (N= 17) stated that they had earned a BA/BS as their highest academic degree, and 32% (N=9) had earned a Master’s

degree. One person indicated that he had no degree and one person did not respond. As shown in Table 11.1, just under half of the teachers (46%) entered teaching through a traditional path to certification. The other half of these teachers entered their teaching profession through an alternate route certification program, with 14% (4) of these through the Teach For America program.

Table 11.1

Teachers' Path into Teaching: Traditional or Alternate Route. Response to question "Did you enter teaching through an alternative certification program, teaching residency or other non-traditional route?"

Path to certification	Number #	Percent %
Traditional	13	46
Alternate Route – general	10	36
Alternate Route –Teach For America (TFA)	4	14
No Answer	1	4

Note. Yes/No; N=28.

The 28 respondents seemed to be representative of the BRICK Avon teaching faculty content areas (38). There were responses from at least one teacher at every grade level (K–8), teachers of every subject (language arts, science, math, humanities), a number of enrichment teachers (music, art, Mandarin), a special needs teacher, and an intervention teacher and coach.

Table 11.2

Teaching Experience of Respondents by Number of Years of Overall Teaching Experience, Years at NPS and Years at BAA

Path to certification	Number #	Percent %
Traditional	13	46
Alternate Route – general	10	36
Alternate Route –Teach For America (TFA)	4	14
No Answer	1	4

Note. N=28 (Year 3 AY 2012–13).

As shown in Table 11.2,, the length of teaching experience of survey respondents ranged from 1 to 39 years, and from 1 to 19 years of experience at BRICK Avon Ave School. Sixty–four percent (64%) (18 of 28) of teachers indicated they had five or more years of teaching experience (Table 11.2). A little more than one–third of respondents (9) had five years or less teaching experience. Seventy–nine (79%) percent (22) of respondents had two (2) years or less teaching at BRICK Avon Avenue Academy. Eighty–two percent (82%) of all respondents said they “hoped to be at BAA next year.”

Teacher Values and Commitment

Table 11.3

Responses to School as a Workplace: Student–Centered Teaching

Path to certification	Number #	Percent %
Traditional	13	46
Alternate Route – general	10	36
Alternate Route –Teach For America (TFA)	4	14
No Answer	1	4

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest 1.0%. N=28.

The overwhelming response of teachers was very positive concerning teachers' commitment to their work and to their students. As shown in Table 11.3, between 82.1% and 92.8% of teachers “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statements about the school workplace: teachers working hard for student success (89%), caring about students (93%), and having shared values and mission (86%). Additionally, teachers valued collaboration with other teachers around student work (86%), and overall use of data to guide their teaching (82%). As shown in Table 11.6, 89% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they devoted much time and effort to planning an instructional program based on student needs, and 82% agreed or strongly agreed that teachers do this instructional planning work in teams with other teachers.

In open–ended comments, teachers stated that they “work together in grade level meetings, implementing strategies to help each child achieve benchmarks and beyond” (Table 11.7).

Teacher Leadership and Curriculum

Teacher responses to the statements about school leadership and change were more varied in their agreement than in the first set of statements (Table 11.6).

Respondents were 75% in agreement that they feel teachers are leaders at BAA; and that they respect teachers who take on leadership roles (79%). Similarly, respondents agreed (79%) that teachers are effective managers and help make the school run smoothly.

However, when asked as a yes/no question: “Do you hold a leadership position in your school?” eight teachers or 29% responded “yes.” Sixty-seven percent (19 teachers) responded “no.” Of those who responded “yes,” they listed holding the following leadership positions:

- grade level leader/co-grade level leader: 7 write-ins;
- one of the grade leaders also listed: “hiring committee coordinator”; and
- one teacher said: “I am involved in bringing best math practices to my grade level team.”

Since the BRICK model claimed that “all teachers are leaders,” it seems teachers may have understood the term “leader” in the specific question as someone who carried an additional specific title with a role and responsibility (such as Grade Level Leader, or Departmental leader) in addition to “classroom teacher.”

Table 11.4

Results of the Survey Section “School Leadership and Changes”; responses to request “Please mark the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following statements regarding BAA:”

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Response
a. Teachers spend a lot of time discussing student data to plan changes to the instructional program or plan interventions to assist students individual learning needs	-----	-----	68% (19)	21% (6)	11% (3)
b. Teachers in BRICK Avon Ave Academy feel that they are leaders in this school.	4% (1)	14% (4)	68% (19)	7% (2)	7% (2)
c. Teachers respect other teachers who take the lead in school improvement effort.	-----	18% (5)	61% (17)	18% (5)	4% (1)
d. Teachers participate in instructional planning with teams of other teachers.	-----	11% (3)	50% (14)	32% (9)	7% (2)
e. Teachers are effective managers who make the school run smoothly.	----- -	11% (3)	68% (19)	11% (3)	11% (3)
g. We have so many different programs in this school that I can't keep track of them all.	-----	32% (9)	46% (13)	18% (5)	4% (1)
h. Many special programs come and go at this school.	-----	61% (17)	18% (5)	11% (3)	11% (3)
i. Teachers help insure that curriculum, instruction and learning materials are well coordinated across the different grade levels at this school.	7% (2)	32% (9)	54% (15)	7% (2)	----- --
j. There is a consistency in curriculum instruction and learning materials among teachers in the same grade level at this school.	7% (2)	25% (7)	54% (15)	14% (4)	

Note. Percentages are rounded to the nearest 1%. N=28.

As shown in Table 11.4, teacher responses were more divided about how well curriculum and programs were implemented and sustained at BRICK Avon, and, about how much teachers insured consistency and coordination of curriculum and instruction across grade levels at the school. Generally, teacher responses were 50–60% positive about the areas regarding curriculum sustainability and consistency. These responses indicate that teachers were feeling fairly comfortable and positive by this point about working together with other teachers to reflect, analyze student data, and plan new strategies. Their responses indicate less enthusiasm and sense of control about the consistency of the curriculum, and their agency and control of that process.

Teachers’ Role in Supporting Student Engagement in Learning and in Student Development and Discipline

Teachers responded strongly and positively to statements about:

- Teachers trying to improve their teaching (86% “Most” and “All”)
- Teachers feeling responsible to help all students learn (82% “Most” and “All”).
- Teachers taking responsibility for improving the school (72% “Most” and “All”)

Table 11.5*Teacher Responses to More About Their Role in the School and With Students*

	Some	About Half	Most	All	"Most" + "All"
a. Teachers help maintain discipline in the entire school, not just their classrooms.	11% (3)	36% (10)	36% (10)	18% (5)	54% (15)
b. Teachers take responsibility for improving the school.	4% (1)	25% (7)	54% (15)	18% (5)	72% (20)
c. Teachers feel responsible to help each other to do their best.	14% (4)	18% (5)	36% (10)	32% (9)	68% (19)
d. Teachers feel responsible to help all students learn.	4% (1)	14% (4)	29% (8)	54% (15)	82% (23)
e. Teachers are really trying to improve their teaching.	-----	14% (4)	32% (9)	54% (15)	86% (24)
f. Teachers are willing to take risks to make this school better.	4% (1)	32% (9)	46% (13)	18% (5)	64% (18)
g. Teachers in this school are eager to try new ideas	4% (1)	32% (9)	32% (9)	32% (9)	64% (18)
h. Teachers feel responsible for helping students to develop self-control.	25% (7)	11% (3)	32% (9)	32% (9)	64% (18)
i. Teachers feel responsible when students in this school fail.	14% (4)	25% (7)	43% (12)	18% (5)	61% (17)
j. Teachers feel good about parents' support for their work.	4% (1)	46% (13)	14% (4)	11% (3)	25% (7)

These responses were supported by specific open-ended comments in the surveys. Teachers stated that they:

- “try to make all learning relevant and authentic” for students “relative to realistic situations”;
- “engage students in discussion and take suggestions from students, letting them help direct instruction” (five teachers made these same comments);
- engage students in hands-on learning through diverse strategies such as “manipulatives, charts, drama, poems, music, games, and experiments”;

- “use internet access to support individual projects and activities” that connect to [students’] “interests and experiences”;
- “use chants, songs and foster community with a sense of belonging”;
- use “cooperative learning groups gives [students] an opportunity to teach and learn from each other [through] interactive lessons”;
- use “team-building exercises.”

Teachers mentioned student discipline in their open-ended comments, as well. They mentioned the positive effects on student behavior from “adopting the *Responsive Classroom* curriculum,” through “goal-setting and peer influence,” through “positive reinforcement and rewards ... to engage students into a learning mood.” They also wrote about “discipline enforcement.” One teacher wrote, “I remind students to self-direct behavior according to rules, rather than giving orders.”

Teachers also indicated that they strengthened their relationships with students by “helping with extra-curricular activities and tutoring before and after school, with tutoring on Saturdays, and on Saturday excursions.” Open-ended responses also mentioned motivational activities for students in which teachers “contributed to celebrations of academic success and supported fundraisers,” as well as “using BRICK bucks and daily/weekly student behavior charts to award student incentive activities (BRICK store, dances, and activities).”

Responses to the other statements in Table 11.5 are more diverse, and spread across “about half” to “all.” Many things might influence the responses including time of year, proximity to state testing, as well as other circumstances.

Communication and Partnership with Parents

The one area in which teacher responses were much less positive were *teacher–parent partnerships*. In Table 11.5, half of the teachers responded less than enthusiastically to the statement “teachers feel good about parents’ support for their (teachers’) work,” indicating that teachers desired more support and reinforcement for their work with students from parents and from the home.

In an open–ended question, teachers were asked, “how do you engage parents as partners for student success at BAA?” Teachers gave many responses to this open–ended question about parent engagement and partnership. For example, several common themes and strategies were used by teachers at BAA to communicate and partner with parents to support student success.

- Almost every respondent mentioned phone calls and/or texts as a primary means to communicating with parents.
- Parent meetings, 8th grade parent meetings, parent workshops (academic and other), school open–houses, in–class meetings and volunteers/ support were mentioned as ways teachers communicated with parents at school.
- Pupil action plans were mentioned
- A number teachers stated that they would “walk a student home” or make a home visit to parents.
- Teachers sent letters, notes, newsletters, and emails to parents.
- They “Communicate ... to keep in constant touch with parents and engage them in their child’s success”

- They gave “suggestions and extra materials to parents for student support and learning at home.”

Other comments from teachers suggested needs and challenges related to parental engagement:

- “More accountability and support needed from parents to make our school successful”;
- “No time to really do new ideas the right way”; and
- “Behavior at times can be more of a challenge ... strategies should be put into place to correct that ... so that BAA will see a growth spurt in academic ... and social growth.”

Teacher responses to this open-ended question reflected the effort that teachers felt that they put into communicating and seeking to build relationships with parents to further support student success and development. Their responses also echoed their disappointment and frustration at times when parents’ lack of engagement may have failed to help support the student’s behavior and academic performance the teacher had hoped for. This would seem to be an area that could be further explored and strengthened in the future. It will also be an area for comparison to explore how parents perceive their partnerships with teachers in their survey responses.

Survey Findings for Teacher Professional Development

Table 11.6

Responses to Survey Section Teacher Professional Development; Responses to “Overall, my professional development experiences this year at BAA have:”

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Response
a. Been sustained and coherently focused, rather than short-term and unrelated to my needs.	10.7% (3)	25% (7)	50% (14)	11% (3)	
b. Included enough time to think carefully about, try, and evaluate new ideas.	11% (3)	39% (11)	39% (11)	7% (2)	
c. Been closely connected to my school’s improvement plan	4% (1)	32% (9)	46% (13)	11% (3)	7% (2)
d. Included opportunities to work productively with colleagues in my school	----	18% (5)	25% (7)	21% (6)	29% (8)
e. Included opportunities to work productively with teachers from other NPS schools	29% (8)	43% (12)	21% (6)	4% (1)	4% (1)
f. Addressed the needs of the students in my classroom	7% (2)	21% (6)	46% (13)	21% (6)	4% (1)

Note. Percentages are rounded to the nearest percentage. N=28.

Responses to statements about professional development (Table 11.6) shows that the majority of teachers (50–70%) valued the professional development they received at BRICK Avon as related to their needs and their students’ needs, and that professional development was closely connected to the school’s overall improvement plan. The most positive responses to survey questions about professional development were that 60% of the teachers believed that PD was “sustained and coherently focused, rather than short–

term and unrelated to my needs,” and that it “addressed the needs of the students in my classroom” (67% agree or strongly agree). Teachers’ responses were less positive (about half) about their experiences related to professional development which gave them opportunities to evaluate and reflect on new ideas and try them (46% positive); and also about PD (professional development) which afforded teachers the chance to work productively with their colleagues at the school (46% positive). Teachers’ survey responses indicated that there were few situations (25%) to work on professional development with other colleagues from other schools in the NPS district outside of BAA. Nearly 30% (29%) of respondents did not respond to the statement “PD included opportunities to work productively with colleagues in my school.” This might relate to the individualization of professional development, or to the relative newness of some respondents to BRICK Avon. With so many teachers new to BAA in this year (AY 2012–13), it is also possible that much of the P.D. at BAA was structured toward orienting and training teachers about BRICK’s model and the various curriculae being used, especially in math and language arts, as is indicated in teacher’s open-ended responses in the survey. Teacher responses indicated that teachers would have liked to have had more time to reflect about new ideas and strategies, and to work together with their colleagues. Teacher responses also reflected that nearly a third of the respondents felt that their professional development still needed to be more closely linked to the needs of the students in the teacher’s classroom. These responses also “fit” the perspective that P.D. is a “work in progress” at BAA.

In related open-ended questions about PD, teachers responses to the invitation to “Please list some of the ways that teachers are supported in your teaching at BAA.” The most frequent responses by teachers to this open-ended question were related to:

- “coaching” (8 responses)
- “teachers supporting one another in academics and with student behavior” (5 responses)
- being listened to and given “voice” (4 responses)
- being supported with student behavior (3)

One responder stated, “professional development is directly related to the curriculum we are using. Time is given to meet colleagues and work as a team.” Grade level and vertical meetings (to align learning objectives and curriculum across grades) were mentioned, often tied to coaches in reading and math, and/or to “time to meet with colleagues and work as a team.”

Teachers also mentioned the 2-week summer academy. There were 2 positive responses relating to “trying new things” but these were also followed by them being “not well thought-out.” In a similar mixed response, one of the comments about “being given a chance to speak” was followed by “even if not really considered.” This seems to suggest, again, that teachers may have been asked to give input, but they did not always feel that their input guided the final decisions made about curriculum or other matters. In a similar “mixed message” comment, frequent mention of support for teachers regarding student behavior stated, “we have a dean of discipline to handle behavioral issues, but it is not enough.” This comment reflects a strong and ongoing concern expressed by

teachers about student behavior (and inappropriate behavior) that seemed to be disruptive to teaching and learning.

Overall, the response to this question involved “supportive and approachable administrators and coaches,” and “teachers working together as teams.”

Asked about “changes that teachers and others have helped implement to support student success at BAA over the past three years,” teachers stated that they had “attended workshops,” and “workshops about internet support.” They stated that there are “more rigorous curricula and coaching sessions.” They “worked together in grade level meetings, implementing strategies to help each child achieve benchmark and beyond.” They also mentioned professional development related to student behavior and discipline. “Concentration on discipline, behavioral modification strategies and Responsive Classroom concepts to help with positive student engagement and classroom/school climate.”

Teacher Survey Results: Open–Ended Questions

In addition to Likert scale questions, teachers were asked open–ended questions to assess their perceptions about the model being implemented. In response to the survey request to “Please discuss some of the changes that you and others have helped implement to support student success over the past three years at BAA,” teachers gave a number of examples that focus on building student–centered learning and culture. Teachers were very responsive to this prompt. They gave a number of specific examples. The researcher categorized these responses into five categories by their relation to the research questions, and captured a few of the representative responses in each category (Table 11.7).

Table 11.7

Teachers Survey Open–Ended Responses to Specific Ways in Which They Have Contributed to Increasing Student Success at BAA in the Past 3 Years.

<i>Please discuss some of the changes that you and others have helped implement to support student success over the past three years at BAA</i>	
Professional Development:	“Attended workshops;” workshop about internet support strategies;
	More rigorous curricula and coaching sessions;
	“Working together in grade level meetings, implementing strategies to help each child achieve benchmark and beyond”
	Concentration on discipline; Behavioral modification strategies and Responsive Classroom concepts to help with positive student engagement and classroom/school climate
Curriculum and student-centered learning	
<i>Changes in curriculum</i>	“Selected GO math/Envisions/LLI/Fundations, Making meaning, Becoming a Writer, and Responsive Classroom” “New math curriculum”
	“Students are stronger with phonics and decoding skills because of Fundations program”
	“Developing reading and writing units” “Unit planning”
	“More rigorous curricula...”
	“Instructional planning and backwards planning”
<i>Using student data to plan lessons with individualized and small group instruction</i>	“Lessons are more structured around student data”
	“A greater reliance on data to drive instruction and focus on individualized, small group/blended instruction, and remediation” (*8 comments)
	“Individualized and small group assignments have been implemented;” “daily small group instruction”
<i>Engaging students through hands-on,</i>	“Teaching concepts /skills via

<i>diverse strategies</i>	manipulatives, chants, drama, poems and music, games and experiments"
	Internet access; related subject games
<i>Engaging students through hands-on, diverse strategies(continued)</i>	Individual projects
	Music and hands-on activities that connect to their lives
	"Try to make all learning relevant, authentic...relative to realistic situations; incorporating them into discussions and practice to engage students; by taking suggestions from students, letting them help direct instruction" (* 5 comments)
Student behaviors & Classroom and School Climate	
<i>Developing student ownership for behaviors</i>	"Adopting Responsive Classroom"
	"I remind student to self-direct behavior according to rules, rather than giving orders"
<i>Motivators</i>	Contributed to celebrations of academic success and supported fundraisers
	"Encouragement for success"
<i>Discipline</i>	"Discipline enforcement"
<i>Hands-on engagement strategies</i>	"I try to relate teaching materials to student's environment" and interests
	"Songs, technology, small groups, games, projects, manipulatives"
Student Centered Activities	
<i>Student Activities</i>	"I have helped with before and after school activities and clubs for students"
	"Saturday excursions"
<i>Extra academic support</i>	"Saturday Academy and before- and after- school tutoring" (*3 comments)
	"Cooperative learning groups give them an opportunity to teach and learn from each other...interactive lessons"
<i>Motivational activities and rewards</i>	"Chants, songs, fostering a community with a sense of belonging"
	Team building exercises
	"BRICK Bucks and Store, dances or

	other incentive activities, daily/weekly behavior charts”
Student Centered Activities (continued)	
<i>Motivational activities and rewards</i>	“Positive reinforcement, parties, celebrations, BRICK Bucks...classroom celebrations and cheers, stickers, student input; using craft or singing and games to engage students into a learning mood”
	“Goal-setting, peer influence”
<i>Parent engagement in student-centered approaches</i>	
	“Suggestions and extra materials have been given to parents” for student support and learning at home
	“I will submit a parent engagement program (it’s my first year in this school)”

These responses show specific and active ways in which teachers contributed to building the BRICK model at BAA. Teachers pointed to improving their teaching as one way they made a difference (through PD). They cited helping to choose or create new, effective curricula as an important contribution. They mentioned student behavior as an ongoing concern, and how they helped to positively address this factor through helping to employ new strategies from Responsive Classroom and more hands-on activities to help engage and focus students. Additionally, they mentioned the importance of motivational activities and rewards for students, and for extra-curricular activities to further support and engage students academically, socially and emotionally.

The third open-ended question that teachers were asked was: “Please list three words that you feel describes BRICK Avon Academy” (Table 11.8). Words listed by multiple teachers multiple times were “rigorous,” “dedicated,” “hard work,” “team work” (4 times); “challenging” and “determined,” 3 times; and “data-driven” and “rewarding,”

(2 times). The word “overwhelming” was also given by two teachers. Other words teachers used to describe BRICK Avon Academy included words that showed the energy and positive spirit of the school community. Some teachers also included less positive terms that indicated the stressful and sometimes “chaotic” nature of their environment.

Table 11.8

Words Listed in Open-Ended Responses in Teacher Survey to “Please list three words that you feel describes BAA”

Words listed 4 times	Rigorous	Dedicated	Hard work	Team work
Words listed 3 times	Challenge/ Challenging	Determined		
Words listed 2 times	Data-driven	Rewarding	Overwhelming	
Positive words listed 1 time	Passionate	Inspired	Spirited	Cohesive
	Family	Supportive	Understanding	Engaging
	Higher Standards	Love	Hope	Change
	Powerful	Resilient		
	Exciting	Proactive	Creative	Innovative
Less positive words listed 1 time	Scattered	Defeated	Chaotic	Inexperienced
	Inconsistent	Unstructured	Unorganized	Stressed
	Tough			

Note. N=28.

These words (Table 11.8) give the reader a sense of the positive perceptions of the teachers for what they were engaged together in at BAA, as well as some of the challenges and frustrations experienced by teachers at BAA. The responses show that the positives outweigh the less positives, but that both were a part of the experience for teachers at BAA.

BAA Staff Survey, Winter 2013 (AY 2012–13)

Demographic Characteristics of Staff Respondents

Staff members of BAA were invited to complete surveys in Winter of 2013 (AY 2012–13). There were eighteen (18) responses out of approximately 24 invited. The responses were from both professional and non–professional staff members. These included a recreational coach, several teachers’ aides, a director of operations, two security guards, a custodial staff, and several administrative coordinators. Eleven of the 18 respondents (61%) self–identified as African American. Two (11%) identified as “other.” Five staff members (28%) did not respond to the race/ethnicity question.

Table 11.9

Staff Respondents’ Level of Education

Highest level of ed. completed	Number #	Percent %
High School/GED	7	40
BA/BS	5	28
MA/MS	2	11
No response	4	21

Note. N=18.

As shown in Table 11.9, 40% (7/ 18) of the staff members had a high school or G.E.D. as their highest level of education completion. Five (28%) had an undergraduate degree and two (11%) had a Masters degree. Four (21%) did not respond to this question. Staff members who responded to the survey had worked at Avon Avenue School for between one and sixteen years (see Table 11.10). Half (9/18) had worked at BRICK Avon Academy for 1–4 years. About one third (6/18) of the respondents had

worked at Avon Avenue School for 8–16 years. Three (17%) did not respond to this quest.

Table 11.10

Experience of Staff Respondents by Number of Years of Overall Experience, Years at NPS and Years at BAA

# of years	# years NPS		# years BRICK Avon	
	#	%	#	%
1–4	8	44	9	50
5–27	5	28	NA	
8–16	NA		6	33
No response	5	28	3	17

Note. N=18 (Year 3 AY 2012–13).

Survey respondents indicated that they worked with mostly the lower grades (K–5); four (22%) worked with all or upper grades. Five staff members (28%) stated that they held a leadership position(s) in the school. (This is the same percentage as teacher responses to this “yes” or “no” statement about leadership.)

Values and Beliefs of Staff Members

Table 11.11

Staff Member Responses to Values and Beliefs About Work With Students at BAA

Please mark the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following:	NA %(N)	Strongly Disagree % (N)	Disagree % (N)	Agree % (N)	Strongly Agree % (N)
Staff members at BRICK Avon Academy work hard to help students succeed				33% (6)	67% (12)
Staff members in this school really care about their students				33% (6)	67% (12)
Staff member share beliefs and values about what is the central mission of this school.			11% (2)	39% (7)	50% (9)
Staff members share and discuss student work with other staff and teachers in order to address student needs.	6% (1)		6% (1)	39% (7)	50% (9)
Staff members review overall trends in student data (e.g., absences; assessments; ontrack rates; grades; test scores) to guide our work.	6% (1)		6% (1)	33% (6)	56% (10)

As Table 11.11 shows, 100% of staff member respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that “staff members at BAA work hard to help students succeed,” and, “Staff members in this school really care about their students.” (12/18 “strongly agreed” with both statements) Eighty–nine percent (16/18) of respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that “Staff members share beliefs and values about what is the central mission of this school”; and, in Table 11.12 that “BAA is a model for other schools (89%), and is heading in the right direction for education of our children (93%).” In Table 11.12, staff

responded that about half of *staff members take responsibility for improving the school* (72% “*half to all*”).

In response to a questions about what changes have been implemented over the past three years at BAA, staff comments included:

- “The atmosphere has changed. Those whom have not been good for the children have been weeded out.”
- “We are all working together to make our kids more educated and develop their skills.”
- “I think we are doing good work together.”
- “I feel that BAA does their very best to help our children to become their very best.”

Staff members seem to be expressing that the staff and faculty share a common vision about the school and identify with being a part of the BRICK Avon team in a unified mission to help its students achieve.

Staff View of Their Role in Curriculum, Teaching, and Student Engagement

As shown in Table 11.11, most (16/18) staff respondents agreed (89% “agreed” or “strongly agreed”) that “staff members share and discuss student work with other staff and teachers in order to address student needs.” Also, that “Staff members review overall trends in student data) to guide our work.” Although a number of the respondents are paraprofessional staff, they are aware of the effort the professional staff is placing into addressing individual student needs and paying attention to assessments to guide the individualization of teaching at BRICK Avon.

Additionally, in Table 11.12:

- Staff “felt responsible to help all children learn” (78% “most” or “nearly all”); and
- 78% responded (“most” or “nearly all”) that “teachers at BAA feel responsible to help all students learn.”
- About 50% of staff members felt that most or all “staff were eager to try new ideas.”

An additional open-ended comment to this section stated, “I believe the ideas are there to work better and together. But the team work is not! Everyone as a whole still has not come together to help the growth of BAA.”

Table 11.12*Staff Responses to Statements About Student Discipline, Innovation, and Parent Support*

	No Answer % (N)	None %(N)	Some %(N)	About Half % (N)	Most %(N)	Nearly All % (N)
Staff members at BRICK Avon help maintain discipline in the entire school, not just their classrooms.			17% (3)	33% (6)	39% (7)	11% (2)
Staff members take responsibility for improving the school.			28% (5)	22% (4)	22% (4)	28% (5)
Staff feel responsible to help students to do their best.			17% (3)	28% (5)	39% (5)	39% (5)
Teachers feel responsible to help all students learn.			6% (1)	17% (3)	39% (7)	39% (7)
Teachers are really trying to improve their teaching.			6% (1)	22% (4)	33% (6)	39% (7)
Teachers are willing to take risks to make this school better.	6% (1)	6% (1)	22% (4)	33% (6)	17% (3)	17% (3)
Staff members in this school are eager to try new ideas.	6% (1)		22% (4)	22% (4)	33% (6)	17% (3)
Staff members feel responsible for helping students to develop self- control.	6% (1)		33% (6)	6% (1)	33% (6)	22% (4)
Teachers feel responsible when students in this school fail.	6% (1)		39% (7)	22% (4)	22% (4)	11% (2)
Teachers feel good about parents' support for their work.	11% (2)		33% (6)	11% (2)	33% (6)	6% (1)
Staff members feel good about parents' support for their work.	11% (2)		39% (7)	17% (3)	28% (5)	6% (1)

Some of the staff member responses to the open-ended question about “How are students engaged as learners and citizens at BAA?” include “Depends on the day ... what happened at home the night before and distractions from peers.”

This comment indicates that teachers and staff were sensitive to traumatic events in students' lives in out-of-school hours.

“Hands on activities and various styles of learning and opportunities to meet them where they are and to activate plans for successful learning. We do our best to provide a safe, healthy, peaceful learning environment with materials they can freely manipulate.”

This comment parallels comments made by teachers in their survey responses about efforts to diversify activities to more successfully engage students in learning.

Other open-ended staff comments included:

- Enrichment opportunities such as trips for all grades, tutoring morning, evening, help and Saturdays. Various clubs to enhance talents.”
- Opportunities to become productive leaders through various programs of choice, including “Student council, and peer leaders.”
- “Students are engaged as learners and citizens by community service work in outside agency programs held during school hours.”
- “The students are engaged in learning because they feel safe and loved.”

These comments reflect the staff’s belief in the importance of engaging students in learning and social– and emotional–development both within the formal school day as well as in extra-curricular activities provided through the school.

Staff View of Their Role in Student Discipline and School Safety

Just over half of the staff members responded (55% or 10/18 said “most” or “nearly all”) that “staff members feel responsible for helping students develop self-control” (Table 11.12). Staff members are expressing an awareness of the importance that improving student behavior and discipline plays at the school. Staff expressed that overall, there is a sense that the BRICK Avon staff and faculty are working together to build and sustain a safer, healthier, more productive learning environment.

Another staff comment about what changes have been implemented at BRICK Avon stated: “We have a new play system called ‘*PlayWorks*’ for safe play.”

This comment is important because it talks about changes in the culture and environment at the school. For many years before BRICK stepped in, the school was known to have frequent fights and altercations which often involved not only students but parents and adults as well. Furthermore, principals in many schools, not only Avon Avenue, were confronted with daily incidences of altercations on the playgrounds that escalated quickly into student fighting. Students needed the opportunity for an outdoor “recess,” however, school administrators had to be present to break up constant fights. Many principals attributed this to children not having the experiences of learning how to play with one another, in part because it was not safe to play outside as a part of growing up. A program like *PlayWorks* sought to support the development of social skills in children through both structured play, through teaching and reinforcing team building skills, and through leadership development. The staff comment reflects on changes and reductions in student fights, and to fighting at the school overall since BRICK stepped in.

Staff View of Communication and Partnership with Parents and the Community

Table 11.13

Staff Member Responses to Statements About the BRICK Model at BAA

	In- valid	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
BRICK Avon Academy is a great model for what public schools should look like in Newark		6% (1)	—	6% (1)	50% (9)	39% (7)
BRICK Avon Academy is proceeding in the right direction for educating our children		—	6% (1)	—	61% (11)	33% (6)
BRICK Avon Academy's rigorous curriculum and instruction are appropriate for our children		17% (3)	—	—	56% (10)	28% (5)
Parents and BRICK Avon staff members think of each other as partners in education.		11% (2)	—	22% (4)	39% (7)	28% (5)
Teachers and staff at BAA work hard to build trusting relationships with parents and community members		11% (2)	—	22% (4)	39% (7)	28% (5)
Students' scores on standardized tests should be used to judge how well BRICK Avon Academy teachers are doing their jobs.	6% (1)	11% (2)	11% (2)	44% (8)	22% (4)	6% (1)
The community should be a partner with BRICK Avon Academy to support programs and services and to help accomplish the school's goals for children		— —	—	—	50% (9)	50% (9)
It is important to continue to provide families with neighborhood-based public schools.		6% (1)	—	—	44% (8)	50% (9)

Most of the staff members (16/18) felt that “teachers and staff members at BAA work hard to build trusting relationships with parents and community members” (Table 11.13). There was 100% agreement amongst staff members that “the community should be a partner with BRICK Avon Academy to support programs and services and to help accomplish the school’s goals for children.” And also that “it is important to continue to provide families with neighborhood-based public schools (99%). This reflects a belief in the staff that the school and the neighborhood and the community are related to one another in identity and in the experiences of the students and families. While the school staff and faculty are working diligently to create a safe environment and strong academic outcomes, what happens in the neighborhood and community still affects students and outcomes.

Staff members had mixed reaction to the statement in Table 11.13 that “Parents and BAA staff members think of each other as partners in educating children” (4/18 disagree; 7/18 agree; 5/18 strongly agree). There was some disagreement—nearly a quarter of the respondents—who believed that relationships between teachers and staff members with parents were not as strong as they could be, at least in part to a need for more efforts from teachers and staff to build those relationships and trust with parents. While two-thirds of the respondents felt that they did work hard to build trusting relationships with parents and the community, there was still a significant group of staff members who disagreed with this statement. An additional comment included: “I think the parent coordinator could benefit greatly from collaborating with the parent coordinator at BRICK Peshine.”

Finally, in response to questions about parent support (Table 11.12):

- 49% (of staff marked “most” or “nearly all” that “teachers feel good about parents’ support for their work”; and
- Only 34% (618) of staff marked “most” or “nearly all” for “Staff members feel good about parents’ support for their work.”

One response was made in the comments:

“I believe parents should be held to a higher standard. I also feel that parents should be held accountable for their children, and we should no longer sit back and allow them to make excuses for their lack or negligence. I think the government or DYFS should be involved drastically.” (This is a strong, somewhat emotional statement from a staff member who perhaps sees too much general neglect of children by too many of their parents.)

Some comments given in response to: “Please discuss some strategies used at BAA to help engage parents as partners for student success” were indeed ones already being employed at BAA, such as home visits; parent workshops to engage, teach and support parents; and take home projects. One staff member stated: “Our parents are engaged with volunteering and going on trips and assisting with other children and new behaviors.” Staff members seem to be aware of the effort to increase parent involvement and are proud of the new parent engagement and commitment as volunteers at the school.

In response to the open-ended request to “list three words that you feel describes BAA,” staff members were mostly very positive. Some of the most frequently cited words were: “dedicated, caring, helpful, hardworking and team-work.” Other words

given that reflect this common theme were: “committed, productive, focused, goal-setters, and data-driven.”

“Progressive” and “hopeful” were words given twice by different staff members, echoing a theme in other words given such as “visionaries, innovators, bold, and stimulating.”

“Different” was used by two different staff members, perhaps reflecting a belief that what was happening at BRICK Avon Academy was different from what had existed before. Perhaps, also, that it was different from what they had experienced at other schools in Newark before coming to BAA. Other words given that might relate to “different” could be “inclusive, unified, appreciated, growing, and fun.”

A couple of words staff members gave expressed a feeling of youth and freshness to the approach (“new” and “young”).

Similar to some of the less positive words given by teachers, staff members gave the words “overwhelmed, chaotic, over-programmed, and challenging.”

Table 11.14*Staff Responses to “List Three Words that Describe BAA”*

Words listed by respondents 3 times	Progressive	Dedicated	Caring	Hopeful
Words listed 2 times	Hardworking	Different	Teamwork	
Other positive words listed 1 time	Appreciated	Delight	Bold	Inclusive
	Focused	Committed	Young	Productive
	Visionaries	Goal-setters	Open to new ideas	Innovators
	Unified	Bright	Fun	Well-organized
	Growing	Intelligent	Wise	New
	Stimulating	Data-driven		
Less positive words listed 1 time	Discouragement	Overwhelmed	Challenging	Hectic
		Over-programmed (too many special programs all at once)."		

Summary of Staff Survey Findings

Staff members expressed strong support for their work with faculty and other staff at BRICK Avon Academy to support student academic achievement and development. They took responsibility for helping students to do their best, and for improving the school overall. They believe that the many activities offered to students at the school during the day and after school are beneficial and important for the students. They were concerned for the discipline and safety of the students. Staff perceived that parents should be stronger partners with teachers in the education of their children. They believed that parents should become more engaged with the school and the discipline of

their children. Staff members see many improvements in the school and take pride and ownership for that progress.

Findings: Parent Survey

Demographic Characteristics of Parent Survey Respondents

Parents were asked to complete the survey at the Winter School Open House in February, 2013 (AY 2012–13). Of approximately 130 parents in attendance at the open house, 84 parents completed surveys. Those completing the survey self-reported that they were 71% African American (60/84), 12% Hispanic (10/84), and 4% “other” (3/84). Nine percent (8/84) did not answer and 4 % (1/84) were invalid. The percentage of African American respondents was a bit lower than the overall school population (92%), and Hispanic respondents were a greater proportion of the sample than the general school population (8%). This might reflect that a larger percentage of the Hispanic parents participated in the open house and other events.

Table 11.15

Survey Findings: Parent Survey Respondents 3 Words to Describe BAA

Words listed by respondents 3 times	Progressive	Dedicated	Caring	Hopeful
Words listed 2 times	Hardworking	Different	Teamwork	
Other positive words listed 1 time	Appreciated	Delight	Bold	Inclusive
	Focused	Committed	Young	Productive
	Visionaries	Goal-setters	Open to new ideas	Innovators
	Unified	Bright	Fun	Well-organized
	Growing	Intelligent	Wise	New
	Stimulating	Data-driven		
Less positive words listed 1 time	Discouragement,	Overwhelmed	Challenging	Hectic
		Over-programmed (too many special programs all at once).		

Note. N=84.

Parent responses to family income are consistent with the school's free and reduced lunch enrollment (92%) and the claim that this is a hyper-segregated, and economically distressed neighborhood (Table 11.15). Parent responses to highest level of education completed indicates 11% (9/84) with less than a High School Diploma or GED; 44% (37/84) with a High School diploma; 8% (7/84) with a 2-year college degree; 10% (8/84) with some college (no degree); and 7% (6/84) trade school (Table 11.16).

Table 11.16*Level of Education of Parent Survey Respondents by self report*

Highest level of ed. completed	Number #	Percent %
Less than H.S. Diploma	9	11
H.S. /G.E.D. Diploma	37	44
Trade school	6	7
Some college	8	10
2 year college degree	7	8
BA/BS		–
MA/MS		–
No response	17	20

Respondents represented a diversity of parents with children across the grades (K–8) at the school. Thirty–one percent (26/84) reported having had their child(ren) at BRICK Avon for one year or less; and 54%(45/84) for two years or less. This indicates that a majority of the parents responding to the survey were new to the school during the year three BRICK implementation.

Parent Views of Teaching, Curriculum, and Student Engagement

Parents who responded to the survey rated the instructional and academic effectiveness at BAA as relatively strong—78% “good” to “excellent” (Table 11.17). Seventy–two percent (60/84) of parents rated the academic programs provided at BRICK Avon as “good” to “excellent,” and the overall quality of the school at 75% (63/84) “good” to “excellent” (Table 11.17).

Table 11.17

Parent Survey Responses to Statements About Instructional Effectiveness, Conditions of Facilities, and Safety at the School, Communications, Academic and Supplemental Programs, and an Overall Rating of BAA

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	No response
How would you rate the instructional effectiveness of BAA?	-----	22% (18)	48% (40)	30% (25)	-----
How would you rate the conditions of the school buildings and facilities at BAA?	2% (2)	30% (25)	52% (43)	16% (13)	
How would you rate the safety and security of BAA?	4% (3)	30% (25)	37% (31)	25% (21)	4% (3)
How would you rate the effectiveness of BAA at communicating with parents?	4% (3)	19% (16)	45% (37)	33% (27)	-----
How would you rate the effectiveness of BAA at communicating with the community?	4% (3)	29% (24)	46% (38)	21% (17)	1% (1)
How would you rate the efforts of BAA to educate low income minority students?	4% (3)	27% (22)	42% (35)	24% (20)	6% (3)
How would you rate the academic programs provided to your child/children currently by BAA?	1% (1)	25% (21)	43% (36)	29% (24)	1% (1)
How would you rate the delivery of extra-curricular programs by BAA, such as sports, music programs and clubs?	2% (2)	16% (13)	49% (41)	27% (22)	6% (5)
How would you rate the overall quality of BAA?	2% (2)	12% (10)	47% (39)	28% (23)	11% (9)

In Table 11.18, 89% (75/84) of parents agreed or strongly agreed that BRICK Avon Academy was a great model for Newark's public schools, that it was providing a rigorous curriculum (78%), and that the school was proceeding in a positive direction (86%). However, for all of these categories, 10–12% of parents disagreed with these

positive statements. Although they are in a minority, 10% must still be recognized as an important point of view.

Table 11.18

Parent Survey Respondents Perceptions About BRICK Avon Academy

	Strongly Disagree % (N)	Disagree % (N)	Agree % (N)	Strongly Agree % (N)	No Answer % (N)
The BRICK Avon Academy is a great model for what public schools should look like in Newark.	7.2% (6)	5% (4)	60% (50)	25% (21)	2% (2)
The BRICK Avon Academy is proceeding in the right direction for educating my child.	6% (5)	5% (4)	54% (45)	35% (29)	
The BRICK Avon Academy's rigorous curriculum is appropriate for my child.	4% (3)	5% (4)	61% (51)	27% (22)	1% (1)
Parents and teachers think of each other as partners in educating children.	4% (3)	2% (2)	53% (44)	40% (33)	1% (1)
Teachers and staff members at BRICK Avon Academy work hard to build trusting relationships with parents and community members.	5% (4)	5% (4)	59% (49)	31% (26)	
Students' scores on standardized tests should be used to judge how well BRICK Avon Academy teachers are doing their jobs.	2% (2)	6% (5)	52% (43)	40% (33)	
The community should be a partner with BRICK Avon Academy to support programs and services and to help accomplish the school's goals for children.	2% (2)		42% (35)	53% (44)	2% (2)

Asked what improvements they noticed in the school over the past five years, parent responses about academics and teachers included:

- Seeing “Improvement in my child’s confidence about reading and math because of the teachers”
- “Structured and strong academics”
- “Their learning systems are strong.”
- “Computers”
- “Teachers work very hard with children to succeed.”
- There are “better teachers, they take more time with students, and push students”
- “My son has really grown educationally over the past year.”
- “Teachers show concern and show friendliness.”
- “I went here and the teachers were good, but now they’re even better and more concerned for students’ growth.”

A few less positive comments included that “they need more books in the classrooms,” “academics are getting better,” and “teachers should not be absent.” One also commented that “they need [computer] tablets for each child.”

Parents also commented about the school’s leadership citing that the administrators “were more engaged with the children and parents,” that “Principal H. is great!,” and that “the staff has improved.”

Parental View of Student Development, Support, and Activities

Extra-curricular programs were rated highly by parents (76% good–excellent)

Table 11.17. In improvements in this area, parents said that “there are more programs”

than before, and these included “programs to improve social skills, school trips, and programs to reward student achievement such as “BRICK Bucks, and the Blue Carpet.” Parents suggested that the school still “needs more sports and programs” for students, and that there is a “need for more community programs for troubled children/parents.”

Parental View of School Facilities, Safety and School Climate

Responses about the building condition were less enthusiastic. While 16% (13/84) marked excellent, over half marked “good” (52%: 44/84) and a third of respondents marked fair (25/84). School safety and security were rated by respondents as less strong, and responses were more evenly spread between fair to excellent (about 30% in each category) (Table 11.17). There was a comment about “unresolved bullying.” For the most part, however, comments about the school climate were very positive, including:

- “I love the staff at this school!”
- “I hear good things from my child about the school.”
- “There is less bullying [than before]. It’s calmer.”
- “The school shows respect for students, and listens to them.”

Parental View of Student Discipline, Policy, and Resources

In open-ended comments, several parents gave opinions and suggestions about discipline and discipline policies. One parent said, “I strongly feel that the education system should follow through with the old teaching and disciplinary actions that were used when we went to school.” Another parent suggested that “the disciplinarians need to be more fair when they are disciplining the students. Both parties of the situation should be handled in an appropriate manner.” And another parent suggested: “Work on

alternatives to suspension. It does not benefit the child or family. It actually takes money out of the home.”

Several parents commented upon resources needed at the school. “There should be more community outreach programs available for troubled students/parents.”

Parental View of Communication and Partnership with Parents and the Community

Ninety-three percent (79/84) of parents stated that “Parents and teachers think of each other as partners in educating children.” Parents rated the effectiveness of the school’s communication with parents as fairly strong: 78% “good” to “excellent” (Table 9.15). They rated communication with the community as 46% (39/84) good and nearly 30% as fair (20% excellent). When asked about how they got information about the school, parents reported getting most of their information about the school from “their children;” with others mentioning their child’s “teacher, letters and newsletters from the school; from the Parent Liaison; from friends and family members; or just from being at the school regularly.” This response (from family and friends) suggests that some parents have a family and community network involved with the school as well.

Parents were asked to list three ways BAA engages parents to support student success. About 30 parents wrote comments that included:

- “full communication with parents, and keeping in touch with parents”
- “got parents more involved with trips and activities, conferences, parent workshops (including math factors and reading workshops) getting parents involved in learning with the child”
- “ceremonies and celebrations, BRICK Bucks program, and reward programs”
- “open door policy”

- “having patience”
- encouraging us to “be positive to your child, encourage your child to do their best, be the best person you can be”
- “parent conferences, student progress (reports), communication between teachers and parents”

Parents were asked whether or not they volunteer in any capacity at BAA. The majority said “no” (64% or 54/84) while 15.5% (13/84) said “yes.”

The types of volunteer roles ten (10) parents reported playing at BAA include:

- “early morning cafeteria and playground (8:00–8:30 am)”
- “lunchtime cafeteria and playground”
- “classroom assistance”
- “trip chaperoning”
- “school BRICK bucks store”
- “meetings”
- “everyday”
- “workshops”
- “wherever needed”

Comments from parents about BAA or about the role of parents at the school included:

- “Parental involvement is very important and I am happy to be involved. ☺”
- “I love everything about BAA, the teachers, security guards, the principals ... the office staff, I mean I love them.”
- “If I’m needed to report to my child’s school for any reason, I will appear.”

Parents were asked to “list three words which you feel describe BAA” (Table 11.19).

Like the teachers and staff responses, words parents used were mostly positive in nature. Some parents borrowed words from “BRICK,” (Creative, Responsible, Intelligent) but they offered such a diversity of words. These included words that reflected a welcoming school: “Friendly (3 times), supportive (3 times), helpful (2 times), engaged, exciting, inviting, encouraging, motivating, open, and positive.” Others reflected a strong learning environment: “excellence (6 times), educational (6 times) strong (4 times), outstanding, striving (2 times), accomplishments, scholars, learning” and “very good school!” Another theme was for safety and order: “safe, polite, respect, on–point, and tough.” Other words reflected trust: Leadership, energetic, communication, pride, honesty, and fun.”

Less positive words included: “OK, unfair, dictatorship, ghetto, inadequate.”

Table 11.19*Parents' Most Frequently Cited Words to Describe BAA*

Six (6) times	Good	Educational	Excellent		
Four (4) times	Creative	Strong			
Three (3) times	Friendly	Supportive			
Two (2) times	Intelligent	Striving	Dedicated	Effective	Leadership
	Helpful				
Other positive words	Colorful	Successful	Somewhat informative	Respect	Polite
	Engaged	Inviting	Exciting	Productive	Outstanding
	Encouraging	Motivating	Outgoing	Concerned	Accomplishments
	Open	Communication	Affection	Honesty	Pride
	Learning	Fun	Growing	Positive	Achievements
	Safe	Energetic	Scholars	Caring	On-point
	Tough	"Love the school!"	Very good school		
Less positive neutral or critical	Convenient	Better	OK	Disciplinarians	Fair
	Inadequate	Sack	Ghetto	Tries	Unfair
	Dictatorship				

Summary of Parent Survey Findings

Findings in the parent survey were very positive overall in most areas. Parents indicated that they appreciated the hard work of the teachers and staff at BRICK Avon in educating and supporting the students. Individually, parents commented upon the academic progress their child had achieved because of the support of the teacher. Parents' perspective was overwhelmingly that they were strong partners with teachers in

educating their children. Parents were fairly satisfied with the safety and climate at the school. They expressed a concern for bullying and for fairness and discipline. Parents were appreciative of the extra-curricular offerings at BRICK Avon and would like to see those offerings increased. Parents also expressed their concern for children and families that needed extra help and support.

Parent School Climate Survey in Fall 2013 (AY 2013–14 Year 4)

The school conducted a Parent Climate Survey in the fall of the 2013–14 Academic Year. The survey was conducted at the school's parent Open House on the afternoon/evening of September 18, 2013. One hundred and ninety-nine (199) parents responded to the written survey, but a number of those were incomplete or invalidated, so N=171 responses to individual questions. The survey looked at school climate in the areas of Safety, Teaching and Learning, Interpersonal Relationships, and Overall Satisfaction.

While some of these parents' responses indicated that some have had other children attending BRICK Avon Ave School, it is important to keep in mind when analyzing these survey responses that over a quarter of these children and their parents were relatively new to the school.

Parental View of School Safety in 2013

Table 11.20

Parent School Climate Survey Responses for Safety at BRICK Avon Academy September 18, 2013

SAFETY	No Answer % (N)	Strongly Disagree % (N)	Disagree % (N)	Agree %(N)	Strongly Agree % (N)
This school is physically safe for the students	4% (7)	1% (1)	2% (4)	54% (88)	43% (71)
My child feels safe in this school.	3% (5)	1% (1)	1% (2)	49% (83)	47% (80)
The rules at this school are clearly communicated and applied fairly.	3% (6)	1% (1)	2% (3)	42% (72)	52% (89)
Fighting is not tolerated at this school.	4% (7)	1% (1)	2% (4)	35% (60)	57% (98)
My child worries about being teased and picked on by other students at this school.	8% (14)	26% (45)	30% (52)	18% (30)	18% (30)
My child has been bullied by other students in this school.	6% (10)	39% (66)	29% (50)	13% (22)	14% (23)
Bullying is a problem at this school.	6% (10)	29% (50)	34% (58)	17% (29)	14% (24)
When my child is bullied, adults at this school take action to resolve the situation.	9% (16)	6% (10)	6% (11)	42% (72)	35% (59)
Bullying is not a problem at this school.	9% (16)	6% (10)	17% (29)	33% (57)	35% (59)

Note. The school administered the survey and shared data with the researcher. N=171.

Parents responded (Table 11.20) that they felt very positive about the school being physically safe for their children (97% agreed), and the rules being clearly communicated and fairly applied (95% agreed); and that fighting was not tolerated (92%). However, when the questions centered on bullying, the responses changed:

- 36% (60/171) of parents responded that “my child worries about being teased and picked on by other students at this school”;
- 27% (45/171) agreed that “my child has been bullied by other students in this school”;
- 31% (53/171) responded that “bullying is a problem at this school”; and
- on another similar statement, 68% agreed that bullying is not a problem at this school (with 23% disagreeing).

On a positive note, only 12 % (21/171) of parents disagreed with the statement that “when my child is bullied, adults at this school take action to resolve the situation;” while 78% (134/171) agreed with this statement. This indicated that although bullying is a problem for about one third of the children of the parents responding to the survey, parents feel that adults do respond to the problem when it is brought to their attention. Clearly, bullying—and to some extent fighting—was a concern of a number of parents for their children. Still, a strong majority of parents felt good about the absence of fighting and bullying at the school, and most parents seemed to feel the school was a safe place where the adults in charge protected the safety of the children.

Parental View of Teaching and Learning in the School in 2013

Over 90% of responses from all parents reflected very strong and positive perceptions about teaching and learning at BRICK Avon Avenue School (Table 11.22). These included agreement with statements such as:

- Teachers have high expectations for my child (93%: 159/171).
- Teachers provide personal attention to help my child with learning (93%).
- Teachers help my child to strengthen his/her reading skills (94%).

- Teachers help my child to think critically in math (93%).
- Children at this school learn how to get along with others (94%).
- Parents are asked to be partners in their child's education (94%).

Table 11.21

Parent Survey Responses Related to Teaching and Learning at BAA September, 2013

Teaching and Learning	No Answer % (N)	Strongly Disagree % (N)	Disagree % (N)	Agree % (N)	Strongly Agree % (N)
Teachers have high expectations for my child.	3% (5)	1% (1)	3% (5)	33% (57)	60% (102)
Teachers provide personal attention to help my child with learning.	3% (5)	1% (2)	3% (5)	44% (76)	49% (83)
Teachers help my child to strengthen his/her reading skills.	3% (2)	1% (2)	2% (3)	39% (66)	56% (95)
Teachers help my child to think critically in math.	4% (7)	1% (2)	2% (3)	42% (71)	52% (88)
Children at this school learn about how to get along with others.	4% (7)	1% (2)	1% (2)	45% (77)	49% (83)
Parents are asked to be partners in their child's education.	4% (6)	1% (2)	1% (2)	33% (57)	61% (104)
My child has access to the internet at home.	4% (7)	4% (7)	14% (24)	35% (59)	43% (74)

Note. The school administered the survey and shared data with the researcher. N=171.

Parental View of Home Internet Access in 2013

The largest difference in responses in this category came when parents were asked about their child's access to the internet at home (Table 11.21). While 78% (133) agreed that their child had access to the internet at home, 22% (31) disagreed and indicated that their child did NOT have access to the internet at home.

This response matches concerns that urban educators have in poorer communities about children being able to do homework or supplemental learning provided through the integration of technology with learning strategies when students do not have access to a computer or to the internet at home.

Parental View of School Interpersonal Relationships in 2013

These questions focus on the behavior of adults in the school, which sets a tone for overall behavior and culture within the school. Parents responded positively to all questions in this category, with only one response total falling below 90% positive.

Table 11.22

Parent Responses to Climate Survey re: Interpersonal Relationships at BAA, September, 2013

Interpersonal Relationships	No Answer % (N)	Strongly Disagree % (N)	Disagree % (N)	Agree % (N)	Strongly Agree % (N)
Adults in this school really care about the children.	5% (9)	2% (4)	————	43% (74)	49% (83)
Teachers treat parents with respect at this school.	5% (8)	1% (1)	2% (3)	36% (61)	57% (98)
Teachers treat students with respect.	4% (7)	1% (1)	2% (3)	35% (60)	59% (100)
Teachers treat all children equally at this school.	7% (12)	1% (1)	4% (7)	42% (71)	47% (80)
Parents treat teachers with respect at this school.	4% (7)	1% (1)	4% (6)	45% (77)	47% (80)
Students in this school treat one another with respect most of the time.	5% (8)	—	4% (6)	57% (98)	35% (59)
Adults in this school work together in the best interest of the children.	4% (7)	1% (1)	2% (4)	47% (81)	46% (78)
Children in this school are asked to take leadership roles in class and at school.	5% (9)	1% (1)	1% (1)	44% (75)	50% (85)
Whenever I have a problem or concern about my child, I can go to an adult at this school who will help respond to my concern and take action needed.	4% (6)	1% (1)	4% (6)	46% (78)	47% (80)
The school reaches out to parents to work together to make the school a safe and healthy learning environment.	5% (8)	1% (1)	2% (3)	39% (66)	54% (93)

Note. The school administered the survey and shared data with the researcher. N=171.

Parents responded favorably, agreeing with the following statements in this category that adults at the school really care about the children, that there is a climate of respect in the school (including students for one another most of the time), and that adults work together in the best interest of the children (all over 92% agreement). Although

fairly close to a 90% (154/171) agreement, the one response that fell lowest (88%) was agreement about parents' treating teachers with respect (Table 11.22).

Parental Self-Reported Overall School Satisfaction

Interestingly, when it came to the overall satisfaction with the school, the responses—although still positive—dropped slightly in overall satisfaction (Table 11.23). This slight drop occurred despite the parents' giving fairly strong and positive responses to most questions in the categories described above. The rates of parent satisfaction with this "Overall" section were mostly around 85% parent satisfaction with the items in this category. The strongest degree of satisfaction for parents were for the school principal (61% strongly satisfied). However, in general, the parents expressed satisfaction with all of the areas in this "overall" section, as in the other sections. Satisfaction with the teachers and the administrators and the staff ranked very high in parent responses. This satisfaction was echoed in the open-ended comments made by parents.

Table 11.23*Parent Climate Responses to Overall Satisfaction at BAA—September, 2013*

Overall: How satisfied are you with:	No Answer % (N)	Very Unsatisfied % (N)	Unsatisfied % (N)	Satisfied % (N)	Very Satisfied % (N)
the school as a whole?	9% (18)	2% (4)	3% (5)	40% (68)	44% (76)
your child's teachers?	9% (16)	2% (4)	1% (1)	33% (57)	54% (93)
the staff in the main office?	11% (19)	2% (4)	1% (2)	35% (59)	51% (87)
the principal?	11% (18)	3% (5)	1% (2)	25% (42)	61% (104)
the vice principal?	11% (19)	2% (4)	1% (2)	29% (49)	57% (97)
the selection of extra-curricular activities for children at this school?	11% (19)	2% (4)	1% (2)	35% (59)	51% (87)
the level of discipline?	11% (19)	2% (4)	1% (2)	37% (63)	48% (82)
teacher support for students?	11% (19)	3% (5)	1% (1)	33% (56)	52% (89)
the quality of teaching?	11% (18)	2% (4)	1% (2)	35% (59)	51% (87)
opportunities for you to be involved with your child's education?	9% (16)	3% (5)	1% (1)	35% (59)	53% (90)
the preparation of your child for future success in the next grade?	10% (17)	2% (4)	1% (2)	32% (55)	54% (93)
how your child is doing academically?	9% (16)	3% (5)	3% (5)	32% (55)	52% (89)
The school provides timely information about how my child is doing at school.	12% (20)	4% (7)		84% (143)	
My child is happy at this school.	11% (19)	2% (4)	2% (3)	33% (56)	52% (89)

Note. The school administered the survey and shared data with the researcher. N=171.

The same climate survey was re-administered with BAA parents by the school in February 2014, the same academic year (N=144). Results were very similar to the survey results in the fall. As might be expected, there were slight drops of 5–10% from “strongly agree” to agree in many of the categories from the first weeks of school until the middle of the school year in February. However, the overall results remained the same. One of the biggest changes in responses from the beginning of the year survey to the mid-year survey was in the questions regarding bullying. In February, parents were split almost 50/50 in feeling that bullying was a problem at BAA. 75% of parent responses in February indicated that parents still felt adults did take action to resolve the situations, however, it appeared that many more parents were feeling that bullying was a problem at BAA. In a similar vein, the rate of positive parent responses for “students in this school treat one another with respect most of the time” also decreased in February. While 77% of parents still agreed with this statement, nearly 20% of parents in February disagreed with the statement.

On a positive note, on the February survey only 12% of parents said their child did not have internet access at home compared with 22% in September. While the parents surveyed were not exactly the same group both times, the responses were remarkably consistent between the two time results of the two parent climate surveys.

Summary of 2013 School-initiated Parent Survey Findings

Surveys of teachers at BAA in February, 2013, reflected teachers’ deep concern and commitment to their students at BAA, and their efforts and desire for closer and stronger parent partnerships to support their efforts with student achievement and student development. Teachers were more positive than negative about changes occurring with

curriculum and professional development at BRICK Avon Academy, but reflected their feelings that this was still an evolving work in progress. In their open-ended comments, teachers cited their work together at BAA over the past three years: creating new units and curriculum together; collaborating together at regular grade level meetings to use student data and coaching to improve their teaching to meet each student's needs and to support student success; and learning, implementing, and supporting the student behavioral support programs and reward systems at BAA.

Surveys of staff members at BAA, suggest similar responses to the teachers' responses. Staff comments seem to be more critical of parents and their need for deeper involvement at/with the school, especially as it relates to student behavior.

Both teachers and staff members use the words "hard-working," "teamwork," and the "innovative," or "creative" nature of tenor of their work together at BAA.

Parents are strongly satisfied with the teachers and staff at BAA, and the teaching and opportunities for their children at BAA. They are concerned about discipline and bullying, but overall trust the school leadership, faculty, and staff and believe BAA to be a safe and caring setting for their child (ren)'s learning needs.

About a third of the parents are new (child's first year) to the school, and are overall satisfied with the experience thus far. Those parents whose children have attended longer give positive comments about progress and growth because of the teachers.

Their words (2/13 survey) to describe BAA include "creative," "excellent," "friendly," and "dedicated."

Parent satisfaction continues as reflected in the Year 4 (2013–14) parent climate survey responses.

Chapter 12

Interview Findings: Participant Perceptions and Descriptions of BRICK and “How It Was Done”

The final sources of Year 3 and 4 findings are interviews conducted by the researcher with the BRICK Avon learning community. The 38 participants who were interviewed included administrators (4), teachers (15), staff (9) and parents (10). Interviews were conducted in the Spring of 2013 (AY 2012–13).

The interview findings presented here are a result of the researcher’s analysis and coding to identify themes that emerged from the interviews and excerpts which address the research questions. This chapter is also organized around key elements from Bryk et al.’s research (Bryk et al., 2010) about failing schools that successfully begin to thrive. Key characteristics include: a healthy learning environment, leadership and decision-making, pedagogy and curriculum; professional development for teachers; parental engagement; and, the student-centered learning environment—which includes subsections that address special needs students, and student transience and absenteeism. In addition the perceptions of the adults at BAA about these key elements, this chapter also incorporates interview findings about “how it was done” as described by these different subsets of interviewees (administrators, teachers, staff and parents). The researcher offers analysis about similarities and contrasts between these subgroups in relationship to these key elements, as well as in relationship to questions regarding structures supporting BAA, such as time, budget, other resources and the relationship with the Newark Public Schools district. The interview findings chapter concludes with suggestions from participants about how the BRICK Avon Ave story should be told, and what influence BRICK has had on outcomes.

Healthy Learning Environment

The first several years of implementation of the BRICK model at BRICK Avon Academy involved substantial effort to reshape the culture and learning environment at the school by engaging all of the members of the school community. The shared ownership of developing a healthy environment centered on learning was one of the important goals for the BRICK Avon Academy. Changing the culture of a long-time institution is not easy. The interview responses below are excerpts from the words of various members of the BRICK Avon Academy community. Participants with various backgrounds and expertise paint a picture of the vision of a healthy learning environment and how they are helping to create it (or not) at BAA.

Perceptions and Beliefs

Administrators helped to articulate BRICK’s values and beliefs about a healthy learning environment in the name B.R.I.C.K.—“Building Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids” —and in the mission and vision statement.

Teachers emphasized “we have to get along,” and the importance of “having a good relationship with the students.” “They (the students) respect you and you respect them.” The importance of establishing mutual respect between the teacher and students was especially emphasized at the middle school level. Teachers stated the need for “calm” and being “safe with one another, and safe to try “new learning challenges, such as in math, where students need to feel safe to be challenged but not overwhelmed. A healthy learning environment, according to teachers was also “student-driven,” again, especially at the middle school level.

A fourth grade teacher stated:

A healthy learning environment is colorful, invites curiosity...and (provides) a chance for students to share and communicate with each other. Any environment where the children ...feel safe. It's a place where they can grow: mentally, physically, (in) all aspects. (Teacher Gr4)

BRICK Avon staff members also talked about the importance of a healthy learning environment. One staff member described her role in helping to create that environment as being nurturing “just like a mother to them,” and helping to “mold the whole child” and to “give them direction ... to be successful in life.” Another professional staff member saw BRICK Avon as a healthy learning environment but said it is still “a work in progress.” She also emphasized that “Students must feel safe and accepted.” At the middle school level, this includes a lot of what students perceive about their peers.

One staff member recognized that the leadership at BRICK Avon was key to a healthy environment, saying that “you have to feel like the teachers and leaders want to be there.” Staff members also stated that a healthy learning environment was “safe” so that it's OK to “learn from our mistakes.” It got “messy” sometimes, and that was OK. It was a very “nurturing environment” where adults “care about children” and had “high expectations and standards” for all children. It was a place that values and encourages “curiosity,” and acknowledges “hard work and diligence.”

It has to be safe ... have high standards and adults that care about kids. It's a place where you are allowed to make mistakes because we learn from our mistakes. You want to celebrate everyone's wins...and approach things in a holistic way. But I think that schools that acknowledge hard work and diligence, to me that's a healthy learning environment. Not just the straight A's or the star athletes, but. “Wow, you did a really great job today”; or, “you paid attention today.” Or, “you did a kind act today.” That to me is important. You really know your classmates have your back and you really know they care about you. And the classroom is like an extended family.” (Staff)

Parents also described the importance of *safety* in a healthy learning environment in “a room that is safe,” and with “teacher structure” that is “firm” but also “compassionate” so that “they (students) don’t be scared of you. So they will come to you (the teacher) when they have problems.”

Safety, calm and respectful behavior seemed to be a common perception across all subgroups of adult interviewees.

How It Was Done

Administrators worked hard to articulate the BRICK vision and mission and to model it in their behavior. The principal articulated her expectation that all staff were valued in helping to build a healthy environment in the school:

I call us all teachers ... my custodians are teachers, my security guards are teachers, the parents are all teachers, I am a teacher ... I am the principle teacher ... we are all teachers ... so every teacher that I have in this building, really excellent! (Principal)

In the interviews, teachers stressed the importance of creating community in the classroom, saying, that we’re “like a family in this room.” This was also mentioned in the context of needing to take care of the basic needs of students up front, when students come in with so much “baggage” and influences from their lives outside of school. A teacher stated how it is important to let them “air it out” so they can move on to learning and with their day as students. A teacher gave an example of learning to “be a family,” in her classroom when the students learned about eating together in the classroom “family style,” taking turns and sharing. Although the teacher said that her students were unfamiliar with this concept, they embraced it and reminded one another about eating family style each day now. A second teacher talked about how a theme of cooking in math introduced the students to family style eating, an experience they were not familiar

with. Another teacher described how students called her at home in the evening and on weekends to ask for help with an assignment, or just to check in with her.

A professional staff member said:

Well this is a big building with many classrooms, so no matter how united, unified BRICK we are, you are going to find different climates in each class. I think for the most part I think we're there [with a healthy environment]. I think most of our classrooms are places where students feel safe and accepted. As far as schoolwide, I think there are always ways we can do more schoolwide.

Another staff member stated that BRICK Avon is “teacher driven with parents assisting,” and that “teachers have more input,” and “administrators are willing to learn and hear suggestions.” One said (about the leadership at BAA), “so it’s not just “I’m the boss”” but “everyone works together.” This staff member commented about how BRICK administrators welcome and encourage parents to volunteer regularly and “treat (these) parents as if they are staff members” with important responsibility and respect. It was emphasized that this is different from many other schools where administrators say they want parent involvement but do not help them to feel welcome and an important part of things. This underscores a learning environment that welcomes everyone, that is like a family, and values parents as partners with teachers and students.

A number of staff members used the BRICK acronym (Building Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids) to describe a healthy environment and examples of how encouraging and supporting student responsibility and creativity are important. One example given for how a healthy environment is built at BRICK was that adults wouldn’t let students settle for “I can’t do that,” but rather are encouraged to try new and creative activities such as the quilting club started by one teacher, karate, instrumental music, and

other similar activities at the school both during the formal academic day and in the afterschool program.

Students are further encouraged and rewarded to be responsible at BRICK by making positive decisions. The rewards and incentives used by all adults at the school with the students such as BRICK Bucks that students can redeem for items at the BRICK Bucks store are great “when they (students) are on the right track” with their behavior. Examples of staff using these BRICK Bucks to recognize positive behavior included when students act to “pick up paper on the floor,” or when they decide to walk away from a situation “that could escalate into a conflict.” One teacher mentioned the program as a support for building the academic learning environment, as well. She said, “The school-wide rewards program, I think that’s a big part of K–3—the BRICK Bucks. We didn’t have that at our old school and I think that it is a really good motivator for kids. I think they need that.” (The BRICK Bucks program will be described more in detail under the Student-Centered Learning and Supports section, later in this chapter.)

The importance of building a healthy learning environment and students’ respect for themselves and others was an ongoing effort at BRICK Avon, “because of our population [being] so transient, we get all these new students. It definitely is something that has to be constantly reinforced.”

One parent stated that BRICK Avon is “different from other schools..” Here, they “care more about the education of kids,” and “try to get parents involved. Another parent (grandparent) said that there are “rules and regulations” at BRICK Avon, and a curriculum that involves “lots of hands on learning.” One parent said, “We have a lot of ELT (Emotional Learning Programs). If you can keep kids involved ... socially to get

kids in the mindset to give back to someone, to something, That helps us not only academically, but socially as well.” Another parent with two children at the school and who volunteers at the school almost every day said:

“I like this school, there are a LOT of nice people ... A lot of them call me “Mom” [and] there are a lot of people that look for me.” This parent became more involved at the school after her daughter, a middle school student at BAA, was experiencing bullying and threatened to take her own life. After addressing the immediate situation, the administrators and staff invited the parent to volunteer at the school. Administrators also responded by creating an overnight retreat training program the next year for student leaders, bullies and those bullied to help students address some of these concerns head-on, and to help build a positive and healthy learning environment.

Brief Summary and Analysis

In the BRICK 2012–17 Five Year Strategic Plan (2012) an *academic environment* was described as “an educational environment where the joy of learning and high expectations is the norm and children are empowered daily with rigorous material to become life-long learners” (Appendix C).

Safety, and feeling safe, was mentioned by most respondents. The definition of safety by the interview participants included physical safety, emotional safety, and feeling safe to make mistakes as a part of the learning process. Structure and rules were specifically mentioned by several parents. Respect for teachers and for one another was also mentioned by more than one participant—teachers, staff and parents. Having a reward and incentive system was described as an important strategy for creating and maintaining a healthy learning environment by numerous participants and all subgroups.

While intrinsic, self-motivated behavior was mentioned, a reward system was seen by most adults as a very positive strategy to help create and reinforce a positive learning environment by student engagement and choice.

Several individuals also delineated some of the differences in needs and strategies based on the ages of students. Teachers, staff and administrators specified middle school students as needing extra strategies and reinforcements to create a healthy environment. Establishing respect and relationships between teachers and students at this age was mentioned more than once. Creating a culture and an environment of safety within each classroom offered further definition of how the environment is built. Further description of creating a sense of “family”—listening, “caring,” and working together with students in each classroom environment—was also mentioned. Other concerns that were voiced by those interviewed included the behavior and multi-faceted needs of the middle school students as adolescents. Also mentioned was the challenge that the high rate of student transience created for teachers and staff members in establishing relationships with students and maintaining a culture of safety and respect at BAA.

In interviews, administrators, teachers, staff, and parents stated their belief and commitment to working together to build a safe and healthy learning environment at the school. Teachers were responsible for making their individual classrooms safe and inviting physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually for their students. Administrators and staff supported teachers in these efforts in the classroom, and led efforts to extend the healthy learning environment throughout the school.

Leadership and Decision-Making

Valuing teachers was at the center of the BRICK model: teachers as leaders, as professionals, as effective teachers, as decision-makers, as a collaborative team. A key element of the BRICK Avon model was that teachers needed and deserved differentiated professional development and support for continual improvement in their teaching and success for students' outcomes. In the following interview excerpts, voices of the BAA community speak about their perception of the BRICK model regarding teachers.

The founders of BRICK spoke about the model being teacher centered:

Well ... I think the model can be described in multiple ways ... I think the primary core of who we are is that teachers are the core to everything. If we improve the instructional capacity and pedagogy of our teachers, we will thus get to the [desired outcomes for our students.] We firmly believe that teachers are core to whatever we do. So, if we had to sum up the model, it would drill down to that aspect. Now there are other things that we focus on—the whole child. We expose them to the world. I want to say that we expose them to the world outside of Newark, outside of their geographic area. Definitely, community and family input. Technology. [Primarily], it's that we operate as a team to focus on the professional development and increasing the capacity of our teachers.
(Founder/director)

How did teachers perceive the BRICK model—did they see it as being teacher-centered? One veteran teacher said:

Well you know, the way they described it to us when they first came was “it's a teacher run school.” Which you know, being in the system for so long it's like, “a teacher run school, are you serious? Like, I'm going to be able to say something?!” And at first I was very, very skeptical. (Middle school teacher)

The teacher continued:

I've always worked under someone who says, “you do it this way, or no way at all.” And then when you come here [to BRICK], you're allotted all this freedom. That's [something], you know? And they are willing to work with you, they are willing to show you. Like if you don't understand something. Um, like when I first came here, they were like into all this data, and you know we weren't really that familiar with this graphing stuff and this Excel stuff, and ... they took the time to sit down with us one on one and show you. So it's makes a difference.

(Middle school teacher)

Another teacher who was promoted into the “dean of students” role related:

I like their model ... *Building Responsible, and Intelligent, Creative Kids*. And I'll just say this. When they (BRICK administrators/founders) first came in, because I'm a lot older than them, I looked at them, as you know. They had great ideas, but they needed to execute them. And, they did a good job, empowering the teachers, and empowering the people around them. They're not as I call “greedy people.” They're letting people get exposed to the administration, um teaching, whatever their role is that they're placed in, and they empower by saying, “what would you like?” ... Because in other places the teachers are told, “you have a script, you have to do this. You have a script, you do this, do this, do this.” And here they're saying: “You don't have a script if it's working. If it's not working, then here, we have this for you to try. And student achievement is big here.

(Teacher/dean of students)

Some of the previously noted comments reflected teachers' feeling that the BRICK model actively valued teachers—their expertise, their knowledge, their leadership. Here is one more response from a teacher who spoke to the importance of feeling valued and respected.

Valuing Teachers

You know, We are PEOPLE. At the end of the day, I'm not a robot. We are PEOPLE. Whereas BRICK, I don't think they (administrators) attempt to change seasoned teachers; I think that they attempt to say, “OK, this was the way that it was done in this era, this is the way we would like to see it done. Do you think it's something you can do?” If they say “no,” they say “ok, fine, we'll support you, how are you doing this?” If you are trying to reach the same outcome then it's not a problem. ... The staff is phenomenal, the administrators are phenomenal. I can deal with all of it, because it's a place where when I wake up every day and I WANT to come work. I never dread coming here. (Middle school teacher)

A first grade teacher says:

I think another thing we are trying to work on here is a sense of partnership, which is another reason why I left my other school. I didn't really feel like there was a lot of collaboration going on. I felt like people closed their doors and did their best. They really didn't collaborate. They didn't really see that as an important value ... it wasn't happening, I know that. ... [Besides meeting with

our grade team and coaches, twice a week} , our administration (at BAA) has done a good job of letting us know that the door is always open. (or maybe it's just for me). I feel like most people that I work with in K-2 feel like they share similar concerns, and they feel they can go to their administrator to ask, "how do I fix this?" And I feel that is so important because ... you can't have a healthy environment for children when the adults aren't communicating. (Teacher Gr1)

A staff member states:

My interpretation of BRICK is basically teacher driven, with parents assisting. Because this is the first time—well not the first time, but I see that the parents are more involved. ... I definitely see a difference as far as the teaching curriculum, where each student basically ... has an individualized plan. So, you basically work from there ... The teacher has more input. Their hands aren't tied to where they couldn't do certain things. It's like the administration is willing to learn and hear suggestions, and from the teachers, from the veteran teachers and the new teachers, they work together. So it's not just, "I'm the boss!" So everyone works together and that's one thing I really like about that.

Here is another way that a teacher described how the BRICK model was teacher-centered.

And supplies, the first year here , I gave Mr. Lee my order on the first day, and I said, "here is my order, I hope it is not too much, it's \$1,000." And it (the order) was here in two days! Two days! (That was unheard of!!) So things like that. A big difference! ... It's different. (Middle school teacher)

Not all responses were only positive in nature. One teacher reflected:

I can be truthful, so I just need to say this. BRICK caters more to the younger ones, the younger teachers coming in. And the group before [BRICK], everybody was the same. To me there's favoritism. You just have to deal with it. I've seen some good changes though. Academically, it's been good changes. In others, I don't see too much differences. (Teacher Gr4)

How They Did It

The principal recalled an important leadership trait the BRICK administrators adopted from the beginning: “When Dominique told us to come with humility ... [As a leader] you come humbly ... you come with humility.”

The principal shared how she saw her role to support teachers instructionally and emotionally:

“The most important thing, as I told you, is providing the emotional support ... messaging, even at night, that is huge. Other things just come up in their lives. A teacher has to be healthy. When one of my teachers has an emergency and had to leave, she had to go and be with her mother. There is no waiting, that is the moment.”

The middle school vice principal described her role as an instructional leader to support teachers:

So my day SHOULD be mostly more instructional leadership, but I love the kids, so I consider my day more like about 60% leading adults and about 40% leading the children. ... I think there are more behavior problems that happen at this age level, [so] a big part of the way that I can coach and support my teachers and build that relationship is around behavior. When you (teacher) are having a behavior struggle in your classroom, how can I come in and support you. How can I help you? Obviously, I can't do that every time, but by doing that times here and there, it allows their capacity to be built as if I was coaching them, and it also builds that relationship.

She continued,

Instructional leaders must give emotional support for their teachers as well. When I receive a text from someone like C, who normally reminds ME of what I forgot to tell her to do ... yeah, I'm going to drop everything ... to be supportive [to her].

The instructional support given by administrators and coaches to teachers will be discussed further in the next section. These statements emphasize the role BRICK Avon

instructional leaders identify as their being responsible for the emotional support for teachers, not only for instructional support and guidance.

Researcher Commentary

The interviewees seemed to understand that teachers were at the center of the BRICK model, and that in some ways that felt very different—especially to teachers—about the way they had experienced teaching prior to BRICK. They gave examples of how that played out in real life and time at BRICK, in their own words. Teachers were being allowed to use their own individual effective approaches and strategies that they were comfortable with for helping students, if it showed positive outcomes. One very concrete way that administrators showed support for teachers was by providing timely classroom supplies and resources. Teachers received supplies that they needed in order to teach. This may sound small, but it was actually very important, and as one teacher described, fairly unusual. Teachers expressed feeling that they could contribute their ideas, and that they could ask questions for support. Teachers expressed feeling that collaboration with other teachers and administrators was valued. Not all teachers were overly enthusiastic about all of the changes. Although many veteran teachers who were interviewed reported overall enthusiasm and a positive attitude about the changes, some felt that BRICK favored younger and newer teachers, or that BRICK administrators were not consistent in sustaining various initiatives once implemented.

Administrators emphasized the importance of supporting teachers emotionally, as well as instructionally. Their descriptions of “how” they supported teachers seemed to match teachers feeling valued and respected by administrators. There will be more detail

about this topic in the next two sections about decision-making, instructional support, and professional development for teachers.

How were Leadership and School-Based Decision-Making Implemented in Order to Positively Influence Student Outcomes?

School Leadership and Governance

The BRICK founder and director, who was operational leader at BAA for the first two years, explained the BRICK management model was to allow maximum instructional support for teachers:

So you can look at the building in two forms: there is instructional—which is the classrooms and what’s going on in the actual classrooms; and then there is this whole other category of that is everything else outside of instruction. So pretty much the two first years I worked in tandem with the principal working our different silos, one, she was doing all of the instructional piece, working with teachers, building school culture, building capacity in our teachers, building capacity in the community of educators to move the needle on achievement. And my job was pretty much to be the buffer for everything else outside of that and also leading up a lot of stuff. So, how does budget intertwine with academics?; so I made sure that we had all the resources so that ... she could achieve all her goals on the instructional side. So it’s things like that. Facilities, yes, supplies, budget, all that stuff, fundraising, yes (laughs). (Founder/director)

In the BRICK model as described by Lee, there was an operational director who handled all of the non-instructional functions such as facilities, budgeting and fundraising, and purchasing. This split in instructional and operational roles allowed the principal and vice principals to focus primarily on instructional leadership.

In his role as operations director, Lee handled most of the facilities issues such as negotiating to get the building painted in bright and fresh before school opened the first year; or negotiating and supervising the installation of technology throughout the over 100 year old building in year two. He also handled the budget and fundraising (such as the School Improvement Grant) and ordering equipment and supplies. In an effort to turn

around and transform a “failing” school, this separation of roles allowed the principal and vice principals to focus on the instructional support. The operational director focused upon the physical transformation of the school, which allowed the other administrators to concentrate on the academic and cultural transformation of the school.

This instructional leader role was clearly and functionally stated in the interview with the vice principal for the lower grades at BRICK:

First and foremost I oversee students K–5 and [support] all the teachers K–5. I do a lot of meeting with the coaches to determine topics for grade level meetings, to work on teacher development plans. I run and participate in grade level meetings. I look at some of the student data that comes in, I work with the teachers on that data, and work with the coaches on student data as well. I run the I & RS [Intervention and Referral Services] for K–5, so I oversee that process once a week. So I work on that for individual student plans to meet what their academic and social needs are. (Vice principal K–5)

BRICK Espoused Team Values

In the BRICK model, decision–making about instruction and curriculum was to be shared by administrators with teachers. In this next section, interview excerpts were chosen which address how leadership, especially teacher leadership, and decision–making was understood and experienced at BRICK Avon Academy. Some of this was built into the structure of the BRICK model, such as grade level lead teachers (K–5), or departmental lead teachers (Grades 6–8). There were decisions about curriculum, or even about writing and creating curriculum, an activity some of the faculty participated in during years two and three of BRICK. Teachers took leadership in creating and leading supplemental programs. These voices from BRICK Avon Academy explained in their own words how leadership and school–based decision–making were built and implemented in the BRICK model.

Yes, I was one of the founding members of BRICK. My role in that was really early childhood and curriculum, because that’s where my experience is and my

passion. I ... looked at programs to see what would be the best fit for our students here at BRICK, And given my experience in the classroom, what works best for teachers. Teacher GrK)

Speaking about new curriculum choices and decisions, one teacher shared:

Yes. ultimately, the administrative team makes the decision, specifically Mr. P [the vice principal]. He oversees curriculum and instruction. But, he is big on being informed. He will come to grade level leaders and ask our opinions of things. Like “what do you think about this program?” Or (he will) give us materials to look at with our grade levels, look it over and come back to him. You may not always have enough time to think about everyone’s view point or opinion. But typically he will ask our input or our feelings or ideas or opinions first, before a decision is made. (Teacher GrK)

Another teacher said:

Yeah, so I feel like the administration approaches basically through their research, and then I think they identify key people in the classroom who are ... like grade level leaders and people who are showing a strength in an area ... And then, they go back to their table and they decide. So I feel like there is some teacher input, but I think there has to be more teacher input. (Teacher Gr1)

Another teacher reflected:

I think that administration is listening to us, which is for the most part, not for everything, but for the most part. And I think that because they are listening, we have been able to make some modifications in what we think is best. It’s so easy to me for administrators to get removed from the classroom, and say you can do this, and do this, and do this, and do this, You know it’s one thing to say it and another thing to do it. Know the students; you also have to keep reflecting on what we are doing, and modify it. (Middle school teacher Gr 8)

Another teacher said:

We have a lot of good ideas. I think that’s one place my hat goes off to the leaders of BRICK. ... They are always solution driven ... I’ve been to all the strategic planning things. I feel like I have a voice. Grade level leaders are there. So I feel like I have a lot of opportunities to put in ideas. I don’t know if all teachers would feel that way. Depending on their comfort level or their relationships with administration. But I do think that is important, and I don’t think you can have a turnaround model without teacher input. ... So I think that, looking long term,

how can you fill up a school with teachers that are bought in ...? Middle school teacher Gr 6)

This same teacher admitted that sometimes these teacher leadership roles could be exhausting:

They [administrators] are always solution driven. I think that that has to be there, [but] sometimes you want to slack up for a moment. So that doesn't work, what do we do? And I say, I don't know, we spent all that time coming up with that idea. I don't know ... Sometimes it's hard, I'm making all these decisions, are we doing it right? So I think that is also part of the [challenge], to help us, we are strong enough that we can make those decisions this year, but you can't expect first year teachers to be creative..

Sometimes in the course of implementation, teachers were somewhat critical of decisions and timing of the implementation, or measured in their response:

So there are times when, like this year when I was not all for it, but the stuff was all ordered. And when I took a look at it and I said this is not going to work, it's not going to be what we need... it was reading...it was writing program. The middle of the year was not the time to do this. And it threw all of us totally off. Mistakes are made because we are all human. But it affected a lot, it really put us back a lot. It was a big deal. So, that was a time when ... nobody asked me. ... But most of the time we are consulted, there are vertical teams in ELA and there are vertical teams in math. And, I don't ever feel like I'm bullied into something. NO, no. (Teacher Gr3)

"I think the teachers need to be involved in those giving more feedback," said a first grade teacher. "I want that leadership, and I've made that known."

Teachers seemed to be in agreement that decision-making about curriculum was shared to some degree by administrators with teachers in the first three years of implementation at BRICK Avon. One teacher admitted feeling exhausted at times by the shared decision-making, and another stated her desire for increased responsibility in decision-making.

One teacher/coach described how teacher input influenced administrators to adjust the schedule within the extended time school day in order to allow teachers more time for their planning meetings:

Last year we met as departmental meetings but last year we only had 45 minutes. We said that was really not enough. So the administrative team worked last year to put that 90 minute block in place for this year. It is very helpful. The teachers themselves have said that it has made a world of difference this year to have that 90 minutes. That was definitely from teacher input.

(Middle school coach)

How It Was Done

Working as a Team

“We are a team, I can always go to others on the team. [Our math coach] created some NJASK curriculum for us, so definitely our team, our administrators, ourselves.”

(Middle school teacher Gr6).

GRADE Level Leaders

The BRICK model instituted a number of formal leadership roles for teachers at BRICK Avon Academy. One of these roles was grade level leader—one for each grade level at the school. Here is how one teacher described that role:

So, I am the kindergarten lead teacher. And so my responsibility is to represent my team at the vertical team meetings, to disseminate information from the meetings; um to also lead our grade level meetings, in terms of like planning and things of that sort. I serve as the “go to” person And also the model for the grade level. And, my job is to like turnkey a lot of new initiatives, or information, to my team. (Teacher/founder)

Another teacher said:

The grade level leader is responsible for disseminating all the information from the middle school vice principal We meet as a grade level, the grade leader levels being the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade, grade level leaders come together with our vice principal. She gives out certain information that we need to address or certain things that we need to know during that meeting, and we meet monthly. Then

when we meet with our grade levels meeting—which is weekly every Friday, we try to address those issues, or discuss that information, and so forth, and um you know set a plan of action how we can get those things done. (Middle school teacher)

It seemed that in the first year, there were also similar meetings and roles for various other staff departments at the school. One staff member recalled them as valuable and lamented that they no longer held such meetings:

Last year we had departmental meetings and I miss those. We had a representative from security, custodial, cafeteria, teachers assistances, coaches, administrators (Mr. Lee) and We met once a week and we discussed concerns of the building and what we could do to make it better, what concerns custodians have, so on and so on. This year we didn't have it and I miss that, it was helpful. It was a good meeting to have, even if we only had it once a month. (Security staff)

One teacher offered her thoughts on other leadership roles teachers could play at BRICK:

But then I think another part of teacher leadership is sharing your strength with others, like those classroom visits and doing a workshop, whether it's formal or informal... So if I know Ms. R. is an amazing math teacher, and I know she is really shy. But maybe I could just have a one on one with her and she could show me about how she does small groups, or something ... So I think that teacher leadership means different things. (Teacher Gr1)

In talking about some lessons learned by the leaders at BRICK, Director Lee reflected:

So, I think there is a spectrum of inclusion of teachers ... There are some teachers who do not want anything to do with development of curriculum. They just want to teach. There are some who want to be involved. There's a spectrum. There's polar opposites. We definitely have learned ... we last summer learned ... where teachers planned a unit, they were heavily involved. It didn't collapse, but it was just too much for teachers to handle. So before we were kind of anti-downtown, you know, doing scope and sequence, having a unified curriculum. But after this experience, there is a merit to having a central core (curriculum) decided by downtown or the school's administration. Now how you implement that, what research you brought to the table, that's where you can bring more teachers into it.

But we have definitely backed off of “every teacher has to be involved” because it is just too much for some teachers. (Founder/director)

One final note was about the flexibility teachers felt BRICK had with decision-making at the school vis a vis the NPS district:

What has BRICK’s relationship been with the district? I feel like this year it’s changing. Um, I feel like the first two years we were given a bit of autonomy, the freedom to make some decisions. But now, from what I’m hearing, we are told we have to adopt this new reading program. I don’t know how I feel about that ... we’ve just adopted a reading program and we haven’t you know fully tested it out and to see the success of it. And we are still learning how to master that. And now to be told [by the district] we have to do a new program... That’s always my concern with the district. That we sometimes move into things without fully um evaluating it or thinking it through so that the implementation will be well. What I love about this school is that you know we have the freedom to make choices, based on what our kids need, I think that’s important for a school. There needs to be some level of autonomy. Where the school says, OK this is what our school needs. (Teacher GrK)

Brief Summary and Analysis

The BRICK model and Five Year Strategic Plan (2012) separated leadership for the facilities and operations from instructional leadership. “Operations of the school shall be separate from academics and shall run on a business model. This will allow teachers to concentrate only on academics and will ensure all resources are funneled into the classroom” (BRICK 2012–2017 Five Year Strategic Plan (2012)) (Appendix C).

The BRICK 2012–2017 Five Year Strategic Plan (2012) stated:

Stakeholders will foster an environment where staff members are committed, not compliant, to the mission of educating children. Creating an exceptionally professional, collegial, and stimulating environment where everyone has adequate support, a real voice, and the tools they need to be triumphant is essential to our school culture.

In summary, leadership and decision-making happened at many different levels. The teacher was the grand decision-maker within her/his classroom. Teachers on each grade levels collaborated regularly with one another to review learning goals and

objectives and to analyze data about how students are progressing to understand and achieve those learning goals. Administrators and coaches helped to lead and support teachers in this process at grade level meetings. Time was scheduled in the school day for grade level teachers to collaborate and plan together. Additionally, one teacher from each grade took a leadership role as “grade level leader” to plan, facilitate, communicate, and served as a liaison with administrators or with other grade level leaders in vertical team meetings. The work done by teachers and administrators at vertical team meetings was to map out how learning objectives and terminology for all areas connected and built upon one another from one grade to the next and across all grade levels. For example, how did reading and writing learning objectives in kindergarten connect and build on one another to Grade 1 and Grade 2 and through Grade 8.

Leadership was viewed by one teacher as something all teachers shared. As she articulated, “I think another part of teacher leadership is sharing your strength with others, like those classroom visits and doing a workshop, whether it’s formal or informal ... So I think teacher leadership means different things.”

Professional Development

Professional development (PD) was a major pillar in the BRICK model.

How was professional development implemented at BRICK Avon to support teachers and students and to develop a professional learning community?

The BRICK principal recalled:

So with BRICK, when we came up with our mission, we promised ourselves that we were going to have individualized instruction [for students], that it had to be tailored. ... In the same way, I am hypocritical if I am going to give this teacher the same personal development that I give another teacher, unless she feels she needs the same thing.” She continues, “And then instructionally, we have to be able to insure that we are providing, not just my great ideas, but it has to come

from the development of the skills of the teacher and I think that is the most important thing ... How do I make sure [I am giving each teacher the support they need?] ... what are we doing to make certain that I am providing the best support and the best PD?"

She went on to describe several strategies for providing meaningful and individualized PD in both language arts (a consultant that will observe teaching and confer with each teacher in Grades 6–8); and the restructuring of the English language arts coach's time to allow for 30 minutes weekly for each teacher's specific development needs in preparing and teaching the new Common Core standards.

The following excerpts from interviews with teachers were chosen for their focus on the area of professional development in the BRICK model. They reflect the changes and perceptions of the changes that were being implemented, specifically at BRICK Avon Academy for the Professional Development of teachers.

Yes, collaboration, differentiation. We are working on individualizing PD for teachers, recognizing that teachers are in different places in their learning about whatever it is they are teaching, and really meeting every teacher where they are. If I don't understand A, I can't move on to B. If you are giving me all these things to do and I don't understand them, ... then it's all for naught. On the other hand, if I'm a teacher who is really successful ... "How are you going to push me to go to the next level?" I think that's something we definitely are working on here. (Teacher G1)

It's [PD] always been something that's a value, but I think that we are ... growing into [it] better each year. ... So, I think a lot of that differentiation for teachers and their individualized PD comes out of coaching sessions which are supposed to happen once a month ... for 30 minutes ... with your administrator. ... at the end of each year, you create a Professional Development Plan for the following year. ... So my administrator pulled it out in September and we went from there, that's what we are working on. We identify a couple of next steps, things we are going to try in the classrooms, to move in those areas. ... So, the coaching has been a great way that we have pushed our teachers and also met them where they are. So I guess it's really the coaching where we have really got PD ... that really drives the teacher action in the room. That and the data analysis (at grade level meetings and with the coaches). (Teacher G1)

The teacher describes how professional development was happening in that third BRICK year, where each teacher had crafted a Professional Development Plan to target their own areas for growth, and the coachings with the vice principal that ideally happened for 30 minutes once a month. This teacher went on to say that outside workshops often depended on the grade levels and curriculum being used.

When we had a STEP consultant last year for K–3, she would come in and we had PD around STEP. So we are finding that kind of PD has been a little bit of a struggle. First of all, it's really expensive, and that kind of PD is sort of a one size fits all, and that's what we are trying to move away from, right? So sometimes it's fine, because sometimes you can get your questions answered, and sometimes it's needed because if you have a new program, like for example, LLI, so we a needed training.

This teacher pointed to the need for training with new curriculum, but that often it ended up as a “one size fits all” and was not often cost efficient. She offered an idea about teachers sharing expertise as a part of PD:

I think that's an area that we need to work on is realizing that we have a lot of great teachers doing a lot of great things, and we should be using them as resources. P is a great teacher and she has great morning meetings. I go in there and I observe her for half an hour of morning meeting. Can I go into another teacher to observe, such and such? (Teacher G1)

This idea about teachers training teachers also came up and was discussed amongst upper grade math teachers:

Ms. B. expressed the idea that it might be helpful if the math team might watch one another and give feedback not from an administrator but from one math educator to another. Unfortunately, the time is not built in ... one of the things that we just recently discussed was the opportunity that perhaps when we do [Summer] Institute (this hasn't been discussed with the teachers, only with the coaches) that when we get the new curriculum, that we take the time to get ready and prepare ... and in the Institute have the time to prepare the lessons, and then

teach the lessons to one another, and then give critical feedback to one another... it's an idea at this point. (Middle school academic coach)

Another teacher/coach gave an idea for cross-curricular professional development:

One of the things that I know that they are trying to do ... I don't think it's been done as well as it could ... but the idea about the music teacher having a conversation with the math teacher ... You have your quarter note, your eighth note, you have your beat ... I guess cross-curricular type things. Again, time. We don't have ... we have an extended day, but we don't have enough time for the teachers to really collaborate. (Middle school coach)

A middle school teacher reflected about PD last year (AY2011–12) and this year (AY2012–13):

So last year, we really did not get PD, well I guess the PD was supposed to be RAMP UP, and it was very poor. So that's maybe why we didn't keep it going. There are not a lot of opportunities built into the calendar for PD. Last year I did not do anything outside. Last year we did SmartBoard training, data stuff, ANET, and so I would say it was better last year when there was PD from the district, but I don't know if I really got anything that helped me grow. This year, I feel that I have received PD that has helped me grow. Two of them are the conferences at Rutgers that I think DA (the math coach) set up. One was on the Common Core, so I think they knew to set me up with that. I was interested in the Common Core and there was something within the district that she set me up to go to. A lot of times I am not really certain how opportunities present themselves. I think my goals are fairly clear and easy, like the Common Core. [PD] might be more challenging. And then I also think that those opportunities were there, I think that if I found something else and I came to them, I think they would be up for it. But that is not what I'm spending my time looking for, PD. And then we have got a lot of training on our systems, especially at the beginning of the year. I think PD is still a work in progress. (Middle school math teacher)

The following excerpts are from interviews with administrators about how professional development, evaluation, and support by coaches and administrators was implemented for teachers. The principal gave an example of how PD for English Language Arts between the ELA coach and the teachers evolved over time.

However, the teachers are individuals, so they need things differently. So Ms. A (ELA coach) has decided that there is a 90 minute period, and they go around and

they hash it out as a group. That wasn't working for ELA. So what Ms. Ali is doing, instead of meeting for 90 minutes, she meets with each individual teacher for 30 minutes each, so that they can focus on what they each individually need. ... and also, how to put the work into the students' hands ... In BRICK's language we would call that student ownership of the work. So she has to find a way to make the work so enticing that they cannot help but embrace the work. (principal)

Here the principal explained professional development as a way to assist teachers to identify ways to engage each student and to increase student-ownership of their own learning.

The vice principal for Grades K–5 stated that the professional development was not going as well as he would have liked, “or as I think my other colleagues would have liked.”

I think this year we have been able to do a little bit more. The new evaluation tool has been able to more pinpoint where the teacher's weaknesses are and rough areas. ... So now each teacher has a Professional Development Plan, at least for the teachers I supervise. It hasn't been as perfect ... as well established as I would have liked. And then I meet with most teachers. I try to do an every three-week coaching session with them ... [for] about 30 minutes or so. I meet with some teachers at 7:30 in the morning, and I meet with some teachers at 4:30. So I think the logistics sometimes get in our way of this ambitious goal of having individualized professional development. (Vice principal K–5)

When asked if teachers could find and propose PD workshops or training to attend, the vice principal reflected:

I don't want to say that teachers don't take ownership of their development ... it has not become part of the culture. We do have teachers that go to conferences and stuff like that, and they know there are admin days, but we have not gotten to the point where teachers say, “oh, I saw this great workshop, I'd like to attend this conference can you allow me to attend and pay for this or whatever.” No, we have not gotten to that yet. (Vice principal K–5)

The vice principal indicated that while professional development at BRICK Avon had made progress, it still had a ways to go to be fully owned by the faculty.

Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development

One possible challenge for having the faculty feel more in control of their own professional development is the fact that teacher evaluation and salary advancement is tied to professional development and success. The researcher asked the administrator about this possible conflict: “How do you make evaluation part of a continuous improvement process rather than a punitive thing or perceived as a punitive thing when it is tied into a job and a pension and salary?” The vice principal responded:

I think that is something that we have definitely struggled with this year, because I think that when we really first came in three years ago, it was not our style to come in guns blazing, you know we want to get rid of you ... or ... we are going to write you up, and get you out. ... We have to develop conversations and leveling with teachers, that this is where you are, and that's OK, and that this is what we are going to do to move you forward. ... And I think a lot of teachers get that, quite a few teachers will come in post-observation I think I was partially effective in this area, but effective here ... so I think we have gotten to an environment where that teachers feel more comfortable ... to a place where they feel safe? I've had teachers ask me, you know, “are you trying to get me out?” And I say, “if you want to leave, that's up to you, but no.” People have voluntarily left, you know, that this wasn't a good fit for them. (Vice principal K-5)

Researcher question: “But ideally you are investing in teachers heavily, you would want to keep them. You wouldn't want to lose them?”

And I think that has been a hard mindset to change, because number one, everyone has already been rated as satisfactory for years, you know what I mean? And so, when a new tool that has raised the stakes comes in and more clearly defines what good teaching is, and you don't ... it's not that you cannot do it, but it's just that you have not necessarily focused your attention on those things ... It can sometimes be a shock. But this is what the district is saying, it's a relatively researched based rubric, but it's also shifted those mindsets as well. ...

We actually have more new teachers this year, who came into the building; whereas the teachers who have been here kind of get that, and people are a little more tense during the observations. Everyone is always more tense with the observations, but more so teachers who are newer [to the school than those who have been here longer.]

The vice principal continued to talk about the overlap in evaluation observations with professional development coachings for both tenured and non-tenured teachers:

Non-tenured [teachers] should be three [evaluations per year]. Tenured should be one to two [observations/evaluations]. [These observations are not a surprise], and what the district is moving more toward now is more partial period observations where you are in a classroom for anywhere from 10–25 minutes, capturing what's happening within that time frame.

So the trick is, if I am working with you [in professional development] on small group instruction, my partial periods should be around you teaching small group instruction. So that means that my schedule, I have to look at your schedule, and I have to assume that you are going to be on your schedule. So people often oversimplify individualized PD and coaching. But it's much more complex than that. Or, if say you want to work with someone on their introduction to new material part of their lesson, like that happens for 10 minutes only. And I've attempted to do that, which has been a challenge, so I'll block out time for partial periods, based on what the teachers need and their schedule. And then tried to adhere to that, but then things get [altered] all the time. (Vice principal K–5)

In the interview with the principal, it was suggested that in the first year that there was so much to do around curriculum, like STEP. Then in the second year there was some teacher turnover with the longer school day. There was the summer institute, and curriculum changes last year and what was there this year?

The principal responded:

But you are absolutely right ... in the first year ... at least for ME, in my first year, I was treading water. I was trying to stay afloat, there was so much going on. I don't know if it was the situation, but for me But in the second year, you get more comfortable, you get the curriculum, but a teacher still does not know maybe this or this, and that comes out with more time. So, yeah, [individualized PD] is just beginning this year. (Principal)

The principal seemed to be in agreement with teachers and other administrators that the BRICK plan to do tailored, individualized professional development for the teachers was just beginning to be fully implemented in this third year.

Professional Development: Brief Summary and Analysis

The BRICK Five Year Strategic Plan continued to position teacher professional development as a central pillar to the BRICK model. “Research-based professional development will be differentiated and tailored made to address student needs. Teachers will have ongoing support to learn how best to adjust their teaching to the learning needs of their students.” (BRICK 2012–2017 Five Year Strategic Plan (2012)) (Appendix C)

The section of interview data about professional development—a big pillar in BRICK’s model for a teacher-led school—provides insight from administrators and teachers’ own words about how PD was implemented at BAA. We learn a bit about how are teachers supported to improve their teaching to insure student-centered learning. However getting to employ it on a more individualized basis took some time. First the BRICK founders had to stabilize other pieces of the model, especially as faculty turn-over was fairly substantial between the first and the second years at BRICK Avon. Professional development and training was necessary in the initial two years to support teachers in using new curriculum and programs. Training and support was needed for new curricula and programs, which included the STEP reading assessment program, Fundamentals phonics curriculum, Balanced Literacy, the Responsive Classroom/Developmental Design Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) program, and new math curricula (RAMP Up and Go Math). Teachers were also adjusting to a somewhat “whole new way” of doing things.

The principal and the brick teachers were in agreement in their interviews that individualized professional development was a “work in progress” at BRICK Avon Academy. It was one that had begun mostly around training and support for new curricula and/or for use of integrating technology into the classroom. In this third year of BRICK Avon, professional development was continuing to improve and develop, based upon individual teacher Professional Development Plans, coaching, and focused PD. This was the first year that many could delineate how individualized and differentiated professional development was being broadly implemented at BAA.

Professional development also was an integral part of regular grade level meetings, through teacher collaboration and analysis of student data to guide teaching. This was often the focus in grade level meetings. Developing trust and designating dedicated time for collaboration amongst teachers in a school focused on a goal of student achievement was a process that was difficult to realize. Regular grade-level meetings (twice a week in K–5), allowed teachers time to collaborate amongst themselves on student-centered learning data, successes and challenges. In grade level meetings, teachers often worked together to focus on planning, problem-solving and development, often with the support of the math and/or reading coaches, and administrators. For example, training and subsequent analysis of the STEP assessments were a continual focus for lower grade-level teachers’ meetings. STEP assessments were administered quarterly by each teacher one-to-one with their students. From these intensive STEP assessments, teachers would examine outcomes, and analyze student trends and individualized student learning needs. Supporting teachers to effectively utilize the STEP program in their teaching was a focused part of the push to continually

and measurably improve students' reading, along with helping teachers be more effective to help students learn. This was all focused on the goal to help each student achieve grade level reading comprehension and competency each year; and the broader goal of 100% grade level competency no later than third grade. (This was a goal not entirely met by all students; however, it helped everyone to be pulling with some urgency toward the same goals: teachers, administrators, students and parents.) Similarly, supporting teachers to analyze math assessment results collaboratively was a part of grade level meetings and hands on professional development with the math coach.

The Broader Context: External Factors That Influenced the Implementation of Professional Development at BRICK Avon

On a broader context, teacher evaluations were a “hot topic” in New Jersey and with the NPS District. The Newark Public Schools and the Newark Teachers Union (NTU) were in negotiations during this same time for a new contract. Part of the Zuckerberg FaceBook creator's \$100 million gift was aimed at having the school system break away from the traditional structure of seniority plus level of education as the basis for annual raises for tenured faculty. It aimed at moving more toward a merit based rewards structure based upon student improvement and outcomes measured by standardized testing. It aimed to establish a new teachers' contract and a new teacher evaluation model. The teacher professional development strategies in BRICK's model were related to teacher evaluation. (The Newark Teachers Union would ratify the new contract in March of 2013.)

Furthermore, teacher evaluation and tailored professional coaching and development was not something that had been exercised in many schools in Newark for many years, especially for tenured teachers. Historically, there may have been

professional development opportunities for teachers, sponsored by various central office departments (math, literacy, science, etc.) but much of that district central office structure had been modified and stripped away in recent years. For many years, professional development at the school level was often a “one size fits all,” mandated, often boring monthly or quarterly requirement. And, evaluations were not very rigorous for tenured teachers, if they were done annually at all.

Additionally, at the same time as BRICK was entering Year 3, the NJ State Department of Education was in the process of changing from the NJASK statewide assessment test to a more rigorous PARCC standardized state test, built more on the Core Content of Standards. Equipping teachers (and students) to make a transition from more of a multiple choice type test to a critical thinking type of test based on grade level learning standards was also a big part of the teaching and learning environment on a broader scale, and one that involved serious professional development, planning, and decision-making.

Pedagogy and Curriculum at BRICK Avon Academy

What were key decisions and strategies for pedagogy and curriculum at BRICK Avon? How were key strategies for pedagogy and instruction developed and implemented, and how were these assessed for continuation, modification or abandonment over time?

The following excerpts from interviews were chosen for their focus on the area of curriculum and pedagogy and assessment in the BRICK model. The section starts with interview excerpts from the vice principal of Grades K–5 that offer an overview of the BRICK approach, followed by excerpts from teacher interviews about the same topic.

In the first part of this interview, the vice principal describes changes over time at BRICK Avon in the way curriculum was chosen and in the way teachers were engaged with creating curriculum over time. In the second part of this interview he gives a great overview of the reading and math curriculum that BRICK has worked so hard to develop over time to meet student needs and move students forward in their literacy and math mastery and achievement.

I think both my role and the coaches' role is to go out there and look what is available. ...My role has really has shifted a bit since the first year, where we were more ambitious, where the teachers were going to design their own curriculum. We were going to make units of study, even up to this year. But then when we got into the work, it was kind of a big thing to bite off. And then some of our teachers did not really have that expertise, some of them did, but it is also a *time* issue.

Involving teachers in selecting and approving curriculum:

My big philosophy is that we don't have to reinvent the wheel But we do not want to follow anything to a T. We want to be able to adapt something to what's at the school. So then we will usually go out and bring a couple of different resources to the teachers; and teachers are at different levels of capacity about what kind of instruction they can deliver. ... So we did that with math, we did that with some of our recent ELA changes, and then it's kind of like which ones do we move forward with, or do we keep doing what we are doing?

So sometimes it works more where more teachers are involved. Like recently, we had a challenge where we had two units of study planned for this year in ELA, and the time wasn't there to develop the rest of them like we thought that we would. And then it's ... exhausting [for teachers] to create lesson plans from scratch, things like that, so we wanted to adopt a core resource. So, we are looking at "Core Knowledge" and we are looking at "Making Meaning" and "Being a Writer." So, based on where the teachers' readiness were, really "Making Reading" and "Being a Writer" was where we are going. (Vice principal K-5)

Yes, our vision here (BRICK Avon) is very different and the way we work here is very different from the traditional public school. I think that it's a shift that is occurring all over Newark. I think the other thing is the standards changing is another huge driving force.

Changing of standards to Common Core means changing the curriculum:

I think that any teacher whether they changed schools or stayed at their school, was about to encounter a lot of change—with Common Core, and even as a nation. Because they realize our kids are not where they need to be. Because they are not making connections or making conclusions about things.

But we started using STEP here at BRICK 3 years ago, and other charter schools used it before that. So, I think it's just realizing that for comprehension ...STEP is everything. If you understand STEP, you understand how you need to teach. Everyone (Grade K-3 teachers) learn STEP from Ms. J (literacy coach). Other schools are using programs that make it easier for teachers to teach...because they didn't have that knowledge. (Vice principal K-5)

The vice principal describes an interactive process for making decisions about the curriculum which has changed over the three years of implementing the BRICK model at BRICK Avon. In the first and second years, administrators believed that teachers should help create and write the curriculum. While teachers were still involved in helping to review and give input about proposed curricula, the vice principal acted as the instructional leader to search for and recommend curricula to teachers which he felt would best suit the needs of the faculty and students. With teacher review and input, the administrators made the final decision about which curricula to use.

BRIEF Summary

In the interview excerpts above, the vice principal describes changes that are happening district and nation-wide with a move to use Common Core standards that seek to assess how students “make connections and conclusions about things” in reading and math. BRICK Avon’s early focus on helping students achieve grade level literacy competency by Grade 3, and their use of STEP as an individualized assessment for reading comprehension needs of each student is a central part of BRICK’s ongoing strategy to turn the tide of failure to success.

The vice principal explains the shift in BRICK’s thinking from Years 1 and 2 when teachers were encouraged to create their curriculum, to the current shift to allow innovation but also offer a diversity of resources and research based curricula—both scripted and unscripted—to support teachers and differentiated student instruction.

Overview of the Literacy and Math Curriculum and Pedagogy by the Vice Principal of Grades K–5

Literacy Curriculum and Pedagogy at BRICK Avon

Perpich stated:

So do you want to know more about the actual curriculum components, like what we use? So, we’ll start with literacy.

So K–3 we use Wilson *Foundations* for our phonics program, so students have *Foundations* for 4–5 days a week for about 35 minutes. So that’s a pretty scripted program ... it’s multi-modality, very tactile program, which is what our students need.

K–8 ELA we use a resource called *Making Meaning*, which really focuses on reading comprehension strategies and it’s focused on read alouds. So we use that in a readers workshop model, so the teacher is practicing on a read aloud and then the students go and practice on their own. It’s kind of so students can work on their level where they are also receiving grade level standards taught to them from the teacher.

So we are actually looking for programs K–8 so we will not have that break at 5 like a lot of places have, and so we have a bit more consistency over the years.

The vice principal continues describing the reading program, giving a more detailed explanation of the guided reading program they use at BRICK Avon, and how it is done in small groups by dividing the class and utilizing several different reading activities, including a computer–based literacy program. Dividing the class into four smaller groups allows the teacher to have more concentrated time with just a few students in reading instruction.

K–3 we have also devoted in our schedules 90 minutes to guided reading time whereas as opposed to other schools, or even last year, we were using guided reading maybe 4–5 days a week, but maybe each group would only get seen maybe 2–3 times per week. We found that students were making the most progress in guided reading.

So *guided reading* is when a teacher is working with a small group of students that are at the same level they are working through a text together, while the other students are working independently. Right? So the texts are leveled. So our teachers have four different groups, and they meet with each group have 22–ish minutes, I would say. *So a teacher is working with one group, and another group is on the computer working with our online software called Lexia, which I can talk a little bit about, and another group is reading independently at a listening center, and another group is working on independent reading skills, and then they rotate every about 22 minutes.* And we are using a structured guided reading program, so that's another challenge. For guided reading to be effective, you really should be planning each of those lessons.

But to plan four different lessons for guided reading in addition to everything else, it's just a lot. So we adopted a program called *leveled–literacy intervention (LLI)*, which has a lot of research behind it. We've used that for the past two years with our reading intervention students, our pullout students.. So now we say, OK we are still in progress, the teachers needed more structure, so we said, OK let's bring it into the classroom, where it is not normally, where it's more structured. *It's a series books, so the kids go through 20 books, and if they are making adequate progress they will go up one level.* So, we've seen a lot of progress with students, especially this last year, in STEP tests happening now.

The vice principal then describes the writing curriculum and the reading curriculum for the upper grades.

We use for K–3 writing a program called *Being a Writer*. So again, it's again within the writing workshop model. So, it's scripted, it uses a lot of mentor texts, so that the teachers are actually modeling with picture books and read aloud the skills they want their students to emulate.

And for 4–8 we use a writing resource called *Writing Matters*, out of Teaching Matters, it's a non-profit in New York. So it's um the same sort of thing, it's a workshop model, but it's a little bit more structured, a lot of graphics organizing, it has a big online component with different characters who help kind of explain certain concepts and you can kind of peek inside their notebooks, so it has a little more of that interactive piece that the students like.

Then, Grades 4–8 use the *Read 180* program for the online component um because it really differentiates for each student. In 6th, we don't use the *Read 180* curriculum though. 4–5 grade teachers sometimes will use it in small groups, just to kind of further scaffold. In Grades 6, 7 & 8, there are four classes in each grade, two of them are using the *Making Meaning*, those are the higher readiness groups, so they are straight up *Making Meaning*. The two lower readiness are straight up *Read 180*. So they need the more structured support, the more basic (approach).

Next, the vice principal describes the math curriculum for both the lower grades and for the upper grades at BRICK Avon.

Math Curriculum and Pedagogy at BRICK Avon

In K–5, we use *Go Math*, which is a new math program that was written to support the Common Core. So, it's one of the first one that was actually written to fully support the Common Core, as opposed to a lot of other programs which are actually revising their curricula to meet and support the Common Core. So we decided to use that route. In Grades 6–8, we use a variety of different resources um to kind of create their own kind of units. So they use some *Ramp Up Math*, they use a little bit of *Connective Math*, depending on the readiness level.

Finally, he briefly addresses the science curriculum, and the social studies curriculum. He also addresses the assessments that are used to gather data on student learning progress and skills acquisition.

For science, the district has some modules some science models so they are more hands-on science units, so we use those K–8. And in social studies we haven't done a whole lot of work yet on social studies and sciences, we have been trying to solidify our literacy and math programs. Social studies we use kind of more like text books.

Assessments: We have more assessments for 3–8 than we do for K–3. So really in terms of standardized, like ANET it's not NJASK but it's more standardized test. In K–2, well Grade 2 is now included in the ANET ELA assessment. We needed something to determine in elementary school to determine which specific skills students still need to continue on learning to read, so that's what STEP does for it. It pinpoints what specifically each student needs to get to the next STEP level. So we've done a lot of work around addressing those needs.

Pedagogy and Preparing for the Common Core at BRICK Avon

I think um that our (BRICK) general philosophy is more kind of like going deeper in fewer topics. We didn't necessarily have the freedom to do that because the NJ standards were tying us to a test that was assessing a whole bunch of stuff. But now the Common Core is alleviating a lot of that. So yeah, the ELA is still in transition, because no one is really sure what the assessments will look like. And regardless of whatever the standards are, you have to start with the test and then go backwards from it, so we have made a lot of shifts about how we are teaching kids to work through texts and analyze texts, and ask text dependent questions, and using evidence, so we are embedding a lot more of the practices that are expected in the Common Core. We have to do a whole lot more work around what are our assessments, and are they providing us enough guidance towards what the Common Core will be assessing or not. (Vice principal, K–5).

Pedagogy and Curriculum: Using Technology and Blended Instruction as a Major Strategy at BRICK Avon

An important and major strategy at BRICK Avon was updating the entire infrastructure of the school as a part of the School Improvement grant, and then training teachers to use and integrate technology into their teaching as a tool. This was a major pillar of the BRICK model and implementation. It is even more important given the structural disparities and the lack of access to technology that many schools located in economically disadvantaged communities have in relationship to use of technology in schools and in homes. In the following excerpts the vice principal gives a description of

the changes implemented at BRICK Avon by using technology as a tool in teaching. He describes how it was used and what some of the key technology programs were adopted at BRICK.

Technology and Blended Instruction

So one of our main priorities this year was to reduce the amount of whole group instruction that was happening, and have a shift toward small group instruction, particularly in math, in every grade, and in ELA particularly in Grades 4 and 5. And they are giving the ELA small group reading in K–3 so we had to have something that could engage students but also could differentiate for them. Because as the teacher that's the hardest part, is to meet every kid at their individual level. We have some kids in the third grade level who are reading at the 1st grade level and some are at like a 5th grade level. Right? So we wanted to alleviate some of that from the teachers. So we went out looking for computer programs you know, that's how we really we don't believe, I don't believe that technology will ever replace the teachers, but I think it's going to make the teacher's job much easier.

So *Lexia (the language program)*, the first time they log in they take like a short little assessment, and it places the student at a level. Yes, it does it itself. So *Lexia* is almost a continuum, so wherever they enter they just start moving from there. And it's adaptive, so like if I'm in one activity, like maybe it's a short vowel activity, and maybe the program is built for are 20 opportunities to allow me to show that I know what I'm doing ... So If I get 10 really quickly, it's going to just move me out of that, but if I get 10 and I do it really slowly, it will actually keep you in it. So it can tell how fast you are doing it. So that's how *Lexia* works.

So, there is a lot of data that is being collected. Their whole philosophy for that program is assessment without testing, because it's all built in. We haven't yet started tackling what some of the reports are ... just cause it can be a lot for teachers to process. But next year, we're now working on a plan together for how teachers can effectively use some of those reports. So I can Click on Chris P, and it will actually pull up what kind of lessons he needs help with and will actually give me a lesson plan for it..

Dream Box is the math curriculum, they log in, take a test and it places them and it's a continuum ... that one they can do at home, also. I'm not 100%, but I like that they can do it at home. I sometimes worry about too much assistance at home, or not taking it as serious as I would like them to do when at school. Do you know what I mean? You know at home there is a different level of concentration and Exactly, and we want to know what they know, and we don't ever want to have false information. But it's a good idea. And so thinking

forward, maybe just having some websites available that they could go on to practice at home that they can access that we are not using for information for determination of growth. (Vice Principal K–5)

Successes Supported by Technology and Blended Instruction

The interviewer asked the vice principal, “What would you say are some of the greatest successes or opportunities that BRICK has offered for teachers and students around pedagogy and curriculum?”

Some of the successes ... I think that we’ve seen a lot of good movement. You know, we’ve seen a lot of growth, um especially in the lower grades. It hasn’t you know played itself out when it comes to NJ ASK. (brief interruption) And I think one of the greatest successes that we’ve provided a lot of opportunities for teachers to get more information on each student. Like STEP I think really has transformed the way our teachers teach reading and their understanding about how reading develops in students and about how students learn to read. Especially last year, there were a lot of “AHA” moments after they kind of got used to the assessment. I think the teachers are being a lot more intentional in what they are teaching and why they are teaching it. I think having a good assessment does that. But also the way that we have moved we are using it. We should be or ought to be.

But I think they are using it more to plan for those moments. I think the way that we’ve structured the classroom and a lot of the curriculum there can be a lot more small group instruction. We’ve put systems in the classroom that allows more small group instruction to take place. Like for me, when you have 25–26 students in a classroom, one teacher is very hard to engage those 21 other kids, when you are working with a small group that is not just busy work. You could have work sheets and they might be well behaved, but that wasn’t going to move them forward. So now that we have the computers and we have the good libraries in the classrooms for the most part, and we have more targeted center work for the STEP levels, teachers feel more comfortable allowing students in those areas. You know as opposed to the first year here, you rarely saw that.

I think the first year, we rarely saw guided reading or rarely saw small group instruction, whereas now when I walk by, and I rarely ... I see a balance of small group. I see a teacher sitting down at a table, I see students sitting at the table, sometimes I see the teachers standing up at the board, now I’m more comfortable with that. (Vice principal K–5)

The vice principal described how the differentiated technology–driven curricula supports and complements the individualized and small group instruction with the teachers . He also describes how using the STEP program has strengthened teachers’ understanding about teaching and learning in reading comprehension, and guiding that process to assist students to become strong, competent readers.

Teacher Perceptions: Curriculum and Pedagogy Grades K–5

The following excerpts are taken from interviews with teachers about their perceptions and comments regarding curriculum and pedagogy at BRICK Avon Academy. The comments are divided by lower grade teachers and middle school teachers:

I think the other part of it is that the expectation [at BAA] is a little bit different than at some other schools. And I base that on my old school. At my old school, just get your kids to where they need to be. But we’re not really going to talk about what that is or how we are going to get there. So I think that is a big shift. (Teacher Gr1)

So with STEP, I love the comprehension questions ... that the DRA didn’t have, and that’s pretty much the best part of it because that’s what our students struggle with ... Just because they can read it, it doesn’t mean that they know what it means. ... And so STEP really works on that comprehension piece. The one thing that STEP doesn’t do right now, but it’s coming down the pike, is non–fiction. So this is a huge driving force for our literacy instruction, as well as the standards. We also use FUNdations phonics program. It’s very scripted. And I love it.” (Teacher Gr1)

Teacher Perceptions: Curriculum and Pedagogy Grades 6–8

A middle school social studies teacher says:

And I think it’s better [that we have a lot of leeway in the materials we use]. I think it’s significantly better. I think the history books, I honestly believe they’re for lazy teachers. You know turn to page 36 read up to 39 and do the questions in the back. That’s not teaching, you know, that’s busy work. Whereas you know getting into the mind of Hitler ... “How did ... the Germans feel when they found

out about the Holocaust, you know, were they aware? In addition, are YOU aware of what your government is doing? Do you really have any say so?" So they're able to compare and contrast.

(Middle school social studies teacher Gr 8)

A middle school science teacher describes how she and her BRICK colleagues had the opportunity to design the science curriculum to meet the needs of the BAA students:

I also like that we ... in science we attempted to write our own curriculum this year, instead of following the curriculum the district has. The district tells you which module to teach, and sometimes with the rotation of those modules, the students forget what they learned last year. And so we got a chance to modify that curriculum to more fairly address the needs of the students. In science, we um did our own unit plans. It was our first year to try it. ... It was certainly different from what we've done here since I've been here for 8 years.

This year was rough because it was the first time that the teachers tried to write their own units, and decide what they wanted to teach. ... We are teachers and we DO know the needs of our students. (Middle school science teacher)

A middle school math teacher describes the benefits and challenges of designing their own curriculum at BAA:

So we have a lot of freedom as teachers to make those decisions. We have, last year, in terms of curriculum, we had decided on Ramp Up, and they came and did their spiel, and it was supposed to ramp kids up. ... It didn't go so well for us, and we were saying, "we don't like Ramp Up." So we tried to do our own. Over the summer we created units, and we are using those (we) created. I use a little bit of Connected Math, a little bit of Ramp UP, a little bit of GO Math, I guess that's the benefit of being in sixth grade for so long. BUT, we also found out that that was so much, it was daunting. Even having the experience, we were going home and prepping every night, instead of going home and thinking of new and exciting lessons, or thinking of other things. My experience is actually a hindrance, because now I have to put aside what I know. (Middle school math teacher)

Another middle school teacher who taught cognitively impaired students recalled:

You can be more creative. They realized that the math curriculum wasn't working, and they said OK, we're getting a new math curriculum. And I was like, we are? We can? And we said "we can do that? No other school in the district is

doing that. But we can do that?” And they were like “yep.” And we did! ... And then it was kind of OK, but it really wasn’t working that great with my kids. So I was like, “I want to do this,” and They said, “OK run with it, Go with it, present it to us and let us look at it.” I and was like, “OK.” And so they take into account what we need to help the students achieve.
(Middle school special needs teacher)

Brief Summary and Analysis

BAA teachers and administrators agreed in their interviews about the BRICK model’s involvement of teachers, to some extent, in the selection of the curriculum. There was also discussion about the strategy of involving teachers in creating curriculum. This was a strategy BRICK administrators implemented more in the first and second years, and modified over time. The BAA teaching community recognized the importance of BRICK’s facilitation of the access and integration of technology as a tool for teaching, especially for differentiation and small group instruction. There was also discussion about supporting the teachers with critical data on each student through targeted assessments made through the technology–driven programs which were tied to curricular goals, especially in reading and math. The interviews support interview findings about teachers feeling included and supported and help flesh out details to give a clearer picture about curriculum and assessment.

- Teachers at BAA are often involved in the selection of curriculum, either through review of specific programs and materials under consideration, or by engagement in creating units that better meet the needs of students, or both. Those teachers interviewed seemed to appreciate this input and hand in decision–making.

- Creating units is often more work and stress than teachers can handle. However, when the programs available don't meet student needs, it is sometimes the best alternative (e.g., math for middle school grades).
- Adding integrated technology programs helped to support small group teaching, and further support individualized, differentiated instruction. Technology did not replace the teacher, but became an important tool and support to differentiated instruction to meet students "where they are" and to move them forward.
- Assessments help guide teachers in differentiated instruction and planning. STEP helped provide a valuable assessment for Grades K–3 in reading, where fewer standardized assessments were available. STEP has been an invaluable assessment and planning tool for K–3, especially in regard to detailed data about reading comprehension needs of each student.
- BRICK Avon Academy uses a combination of scripted and non-scripted curricula. Teachers seemed to appreciate both, and the way they fit together.
- Student-centered, differentiated individual learning was another central core strategy for the BRICK model. BRICK's primary goal was student achievement and success. Some of the new strategies used at BRICK include integrating technology (both for data and for teaching) which supported small group instruction, and using student-driven (via data driven) instruction. (This would have been very difficult if BRICK leaders had not secured the School Improvement Grant—with the support of the NPS district—and

worked successfully to install working technology into the 100 year old building by Years 2 and 3. This was no small feat.)

- A major shift is taking place across the district, the state and the nation based upon a move to assess student progress using the Common Core Standards. This means moving away from multiple choice answers to assessment of student comprehension, critical thinking, and problem solving abilities—a huge shift. BRICK has been preparing teachers for this shift. They adopted a math curriculum designed upon the Common Core Standards, and adopted numerous interconnected literacy strategies to help insure student proficiency in reading and writing by Grade 3. The vice principal’s interview, along with the teacher interviews, give a view into the complexity and changing strategies for teaching to support individualized student learning and progress.

Chapter 13

Interview Findings: The BRICK Model Perceptions and Reflections about a Student–Centered Learning Environment and Parental Engagement and Other Supports

Introduction

This chapter includes interview data and analysis of perceptions about the student centered learning environment, parental engagement, and other supports for implementing the BRICK Avon model. These other supports include time, and budget. Finally, this chapter also includes some perceptions how change has happened at BRICK Avon over 3 years, student outcomes and lessons learned. The final section is a response to the question: How would you like for the BRICK Avon Academy story to be told?

Student–Centered Learning Environment

This section of interview excerpts encompasses a variety of topics and issues under the broad topic of how the student–centered learning environment is implemented at BAA. Topics include these topics and subtopics:

- *Academics*: teacher strategies such as differentiation and individualization, student choice, student engagement in academics; systems strategies such as technology, Intervention and Resource Services (I&RS), grade retention, and academic celebrations (e.g., Blue Carpet event);
- *Social and emotional needs*: behavior; strategies and programs to address student social and emotional needs such as Responsive Classroom, PlayWorks, BRICK Bucks and Store; club programs, field trips;
- *special needs students*; and

- Conditions that affect BAA student achievement and development: student attendance and student transiency.

Student Ownership and Engagement

Introduction

In this section, excerpts from administrators' and teachers' interviews addressed some of the strategies teachers used to actively engage students in learning and encouraged them to take responsibility for their own learning, along with motivational strategies offered by BRICK.

The BRICK Avon principal talked about the goal of creating "student ownership" for learning:

How to put the work into the students' hands ... in BRICK's language we would call that student ownership of the work. ...to find a way to make the work so enticing that they cannot help but embrace the work. So it has to be different. (Principal/founder)

A middle school teacher described it this way:

And what we are really trying to do now that I've bought into, is giving the students as much choice as possible. You know, having it be as much student driven as possible. (Middle school teacher Gr6)

A fourth grade teacher described other strategies:

So in this room, we do things a lot of different ways, but I'm still getting the results that I need. ... I use the slates. A lot of times I have them working in groups and I give them their jobs according to the students: one might be the recorder, that way that person may need to speak up. (Teacher Gr4)

A middle school math teacher described engaging students through group activities, themes, and even related field trips:

I really try every day to have the questions, whether you are just using their names, but research keeps showing over and over how important it is, we know that youth listening to radio stations, or writing algebraic equations ... trying just to know what can make it relevant. I try as much as possible to do that. ... I

always try to make them [the projects] real world. For data, they make up surveys and survey one another. Even the recipes, making them as much of their own as possible.

In general, I've tried to have a theme for the year, and this year is cooking. And our small groups are named for chefs. Everything in math lends itself so perfectly. So every unit, I created a project related to them being chefs. Multiples of factors. We're going to have a bake sale, how many do you need to bag, how many do you need to feed the class. With fractions, we did recipes, and they (had to convert for different outcomes). And they are comparing nutrition labels, and what percent of your daily eating ... geometry got a little bit cut off because of testing. I wanted them to design their bake sale. ... I've always done projects with my units, but this is the first time I have had all of my units relate to one theme.

When I heard we could do a Saturday field trip, I looked into bakeries, or culinary schools, but Saturdays were a challenge. I found that cooking school in Westfield, and it ended up being perfect. I didn't even know that until we went there. (That was one of) the top five moments in teaching.

So we went there and they made their whole meal. So they made the meatballs, and they made their own garlic matza, and rolled them out, sprinkled them with garlic and poppy seeds. They made their own dough ... they ran it through the pasta machine and made the pasta. They squished the tomatoes to make the sauce. They made their own. But then we sat down family style and ate it. And for me that was so important because so many of them do not eat that way

And we got to make our own ice cream sundaes. And they made up leftovers for them. And they gave them all their own chef hat. They were obviously used to working with children. It was very structured. We took 20 students. Probably, they could fit a lot more than that in the place. Originally, we had invited 30 but some were not able to come. I did have to do some extra fundraising to help go. But we were able to pull it off. So not all of them could go, but I was able to reward all the kids who did a really good job this year. I made certain to take from across all my classes and to take the same number of boys and girls.
(Middle school math teacher)

A first grade teacher described how she engages her students in ownership of their learning:

I think the biggest way is in September, introducing goals for the year and really getting them (students) invested in those goals, and then really working on those goals. And then everything around that is good. For example, "We need to work on this today, because this is going to help us move up four STEP levels." "We need to work on fluency today, because this is related to STEP." Everything really

relates back to STEP or getting a 5 on writing rubric by the end of the year. Or, everything relates to getting an A or a B on the math test. And then on our math final kids are screaming with joy because they are having their math final next week. It's so silly.

Like the STEP celebrations that we do. We do a STEP celebration after each round [of assessment]. We give little certificates to kids that moved up a level, and there's just some celebration basically. In April, after we did the March STEP rounds, we did an ice cream social in the cafeteria, we gave certificates, and Mr. L (teacher) brought ribbons that he bought for all the kids, and silly string. Because Ms. M (teacher) likes to dance, we always end up dancing at the end. Just something fun to recognize that we know you are working really hard, and we appreciate it. And look what happens when you work hard. And that's the whole point of life, right, you work hard and you get benefits, right? You work hard and you get benefits. (Teacher Gr1)

A teacher describes how even summer learning can be seen as an incentive for students:

Summer school program is another part of engaging kids in general, and making sure they are having some sort of fun, right? So in summer school they are going on trips every Friday, there's enrichment after the academic day, they'll be in an air-conditioned room with their teacher and their friends. And Mr. P led with that, like there's going to be karate and yoga, and trips. It really is a good program, so I guess that's why they are really excited. (Teacher Gr1)

Student-Centered: Differentiation and Individualization

Teaching appropriately to each student's individual learning needs was a major strategy at BRICK Avon and one that administrators and teachers commented about in interviews about student engagement.

A middle school humanities teacher stated:

Academically, we all have kids on different levels, so we seek to differentiate our instruction. Like we usually have two sets of planners for different groups. In addition, we maintain a lot of parent communication, so a lot of the parents you know become more involved in terms of what their kid is mastering and what they are not mastering and how to help them.

This teacher continued about how she also gave her students access to her in out-of-school hours:

I give my kids my personal email, my personal phone number, so that if they have a question about an essay on a Saturday ... they can call me ... And, they do. Whenever there's a big assignment, like recently we have an editorial due, I literally have calls up to 9pm Saturday. ... I'm like, "hello." "Hi Ms. J!" And they literally just sit there and talk about everything ... So you don't just take off the teacher's hat just because you walked out of the building. You know, they email me, on my personal email. You know, as a matter of fact, if they are going to be out they email me their paper and I get it on my phone I'm like yep I got it, check it in! (Middle school teacher)

The middle school math coach explained:

Individualized learning,. One of the things that BRICK has done is that because we are departmentalized in the middle school... one of the things that they have done is that they have the students homogeneously grouped. ... the classes themselves are differentiated. So, you may have your top level group, but within that, groups are further differentiated. You may teach one class entirely differently from your other 3 classes. But just because you [a student] are within one group, does not mean you must stay in that group. There have been instances where a student may be stagnant at one level and may need to be moved to a different level. The administrators are quite open to reviewing this, looking at the data, talking to both teachers and the students about what is best for that student. We also have small groups ... it's kind of new for middle school As middle school teachers, we may want to say, our children cannot handle that, but by discussing it, by setting expectations, by modeling how you expect them to move and to talk with one another ... it's worked very successfully in our 6th grade math class. The eighth grade class is doing it a little bit now. But the 6th grade teacher is doing it very successfully now. (Middle school coach)

The description given by the middle school math coach illustrates how engaged together teachers and administrators were in examining the learning data for each student and individualizing instruction even within leveled groupings of students.

Asked about how the longer school day worked for engaging students successfully, one teacher admitted:

I'm a little skewed. Because I have students with the higher ability at the end of the day. So they do a pretty good job. If I had the lower ability students at the end of the day, they would be done. I've tried to do tutoring after school, and who are you tutoring? The most remedial students. They out of all the kids are the most tired. They have to work the hardest. Sometimes I'm just like, you are just so tired, let's just go home. It's 5pm.

The extended day is good if it's a better day, if it's more of the same it's not good. I really feel for the lower grades. It's an intense environment. That's a good thing. Sometimes just the length of the day. My gosh, I get so tired, I get really, really tired. And then last year too, I helped with the dance class, so that's til 5:30.

That's why, on Saturday morning, that 45 minutes is so powerful! I cannot say how much that Saturday tutoring program makes such a difference. Such a difference! It's small group and it's fun ... if this is what teaching is all the time I would love it. It's more learning in a true form, tighten up those skills, and see growth that you don't see in the normal school day when it's kind of like walking with mud on your boots. (Middle school teacher)

The middle school vice principal commented about individualized instruction:

Individualization is big at BRICK, whether it be with the teachers [for professional development] or with the students [for differentiated learning]. They need two very different things. He needs it direct. She needs to just reflect and come to it on her own. So then it's different for teachers, but then also for students. (Vice principal 6–8)

Student–Centered Individualization and Technology

Making technology readily accessible in the classroom as a tool for teaching and learning was a major strategy employed at BRICK Avon.

The principal spoke about using technology to drive student–centered instruction:

We talked about that the first year and the second year, but that just wasn't happening then. It is happening much more in the younger grades now. ... I am seeing it happen in the upper grades as well. ... We talked about it, but we really didn't give teachers the tools they needed. But now, all teachers have SmartBoards, and 8 computers in each classroom, and we are able to discuss about what is guided reading.

[Children are able to be on computers in the classroom], and we are doing blended learning, so that teachers can really teach content level on the grade level where we are reaching, we want to teach on grade level. But then a child who is reading only on a K level, or a child who is doing math only on a K or 1st grade level, the child can go onto a computer and tailor the material and learning to exactly that level that the child is on.

So we have provided tools for teachers and that's all that they needed. And they are doing small groups and center groups, and when the state came in they saw that and they said that. So time has helped [us meet our goals].

(Principal)

The vice principal described how technology has also helped provide a unified tracking tool used to “get everyone on the same page” with each students’ needs:

We do have Kickboard... so kickboard is [a program to record behavior as well as some academic trends]...there is no program really out there that from what we know that can track everything we want. That can track behavior, that can put in anecdotal notes from I&RS [Intervention & Referral Services], you know there is a lot of different things. So Kickboard is the best option so far. So there is the behavior part of it. So we can track behaviors and anecdotal notes around behavior that teachers can see, that teachers can see based on where the kid is . Then there is also an academic side of it, so we use it primarily for math. So all the teachers track their end of unit assessments, and then we upload it into Kickboard so we can actually look at what the trends are for each teacher, what the trends are for the grade, what the standard trends are, so that has been very helpful. So Ms. A (math coach) uses that during meetings and things to remediate plans for [certain areas. (Vice principal K-5)

The vice principal also mentioned that the comprehensive system for tracking students and their needs is still something he does manually in Excel:

But what we really wanted to do was ... did you see the BRICK Plan? (He pauses to pull out an individualized student brick plan). So basically we wanted to find something that could filter everything into something like this. Because right now I currently organize everything and export everything into an EXCEL document. And it’s for first cycle, second cycle, third cycle. So it’s really like where we house all of our data. So, it’s like our own little report card. ...so we were really looking for something that could funnel all this information into one place. (*Did you create this?* Yeah). So this is one thing that we created so that if you wanted to see if the student had an Avon teacher, and this also includes the interventions. And then these are the academic goals and the interventions. (*Is this something everyone can go up and see?* No, it’s paper.) But it has helped a lot. ... But it does track...and this is what has begun to drive the [I&RS] conferences. If the kid got a D in reading, and we have a lot of parents who said, “you never told me that my kid couldn’t read on grade level!” More so last year ... because parents are a lot more aware of that this year. (Vice principal K-5)

Student-Centered: Intervention & Referral Services (IR&S)

A number of staff and faculty members who were interviewed stated how much they appreciated the vice principal’s leadership for the I&RS process, and the way that he

handled it. In his interview, the vice principal described the intervention system used at BRICK Avon to address students who were identified for failing to make adequate progress in their individual learning.

The vice principal for Grades K–5 explained:

I& RS stands for Intervention and Referral Services and it's actually a state law, it's a state mandate. So it's essentially when anyone who cares about a student from the parent to an administrator to a coach to a teacher or to the social worker or guidance counselor notices that a student is having academic or behavioral problem or both they bring it to my attention. I hold a meeting with the parent (and the school team), we talk about what some of the student's strengths and weaknesses are, we look at some of their student work, the data that comes along with them, and we identify ...some goals for that student. So whether it's staying in their seat for an extended period of time, or increasing their STEP scores in the next six weeks. So we identify some very specific goals and then we identify different interventions that can be used to help the child: what can happen at home, what should happen in school? Then we determine when we should follow up. Some cases we follow up in three weeks, some cases we follow up in six weeks, some cases in 12 weeks, just depending on what we decide to do with that student. If it's a student who is really struggling with reading, we may wait longer to see if the interventions we put in place show up; they are not going to show up in a month.

The vice principal explained who attends the I&RS meeting according to the needs and circumstances of each individual student:

So I'm always there, a teacher definitely has to be there, that's a requirement. [We always try to have a parent or guardian there]. And we usually bring in a sub, because it is an important thing and we can't do it around preps because [that's not allowable]. And then the social worker or guidance counselor, sometimes both, [is there] depending on the case. I always email the list of students that I am meeting with a week before so that the attendance counselor can look at the list and she can meet with any of the students who may be a concern for attendance. So there always has to be a minimum of three people, myself, the teacher, and someone from the support team, and ideally, myself, the teacher, someone from the support team and the parent. Because I have the academic and some of the social just from my experience, but the guidance counselor and the social worker are the ones that can really dig a bit deeper to determine [other needs or circumstances].

After the interventions agreed upon are implemented, the parent and team met again to review a student's progress.

Then when we come back and meet on it. The teacher will bring evidence of progress toward meeting those goals, and then at that meeting we determine if we revise the goals, we may change the goals. In some cases the student may no longer need I&RS because there were solutions to what the challenges were; and in some cases the child may need referral to the Child Study Team. So, if we notice that they are not making progress, they are not meeting the goals, and we have numerous interventions... it's time for us to see if there is something else going on. ... And then, we sit down at this table and determine what resources the school has. So we know that we have a certain number of seats available in those programs, and so it's my job to assign a certain number of students for those interventions.

So I&RS is more like an early prevention for academics..

Right, and it's overwhelming for the teacher, because there is quite a bit of paper work involved. So the way I usually do it is that after every round of testing, we usually have the teachers kind of prioritize who those students are, if they are not part of I&RS. We look at the lower level students, those are the emergencies. I think at the beginning of the year we had a hundred and some students, and by this time of the year, we have 70 some students.

The vice principal responded to the interviewer's comment that faculty members seem to appreciate that the I&RS process he leads is something that they can depend on, that it's working as a preventative measure.

Yes, and I think that it really has changed how ... the way we address the needs of students. I think really having a pathway for the student to go through to have their needs assessed and then addressed has been really helpful. We have had a lot of referrals that go to the Child Study Team. We are always doing catch up, we have a lot of new students. We have a lot of new students, a lot of my cases are new students. Yes, so after a week, the teacher will be, "I mean, we need to meet on this kid," and I mean, this is a priority at this time of year, we don't need to go any further with this. (Vice principal K-5)

The vice principal commented upon the importance of community resources in order to address individual student needs:

Some of students have so many things , just so many things going on, And putting in better supports, and even having a better pipeline to better support services.

Whether it's Beth Israel, the Partnership for Children, things like that. These sorts of things just take time. I guess that's my biggest thing right now, this has to go more to scale, and this I&RS, and trends, and this needs to go to where we can identify trends, and to some extent we can now see patterns. Like 75% of the kids that come in, are not on where they need to be so those kids should automatically go to I& RS, and should go to intervention services, things like that. Like today, we have a kid who came in who came in last week ... Kids slip through the cracks real quick. (Vice principal K-5)

Student-Centered: Retention

Teachers, staff and administrators were asked to comment in interviews about how they viewed using retention as a strategy to help a child. A veteran third grade teacher responded:

[It has helped] tremendously, tremendously! Last year, who did I retain? S and Z. Z was a tremendous discipline [problem], he wouldn't do any work ... math, [and] he wouldn't do any reading. I knew he was very bright. He spent the whole year doing nothing and aggravating me. And I retained him. S, a very sweet little girl, just couldn't grasp math. Just couldn't do it. The following year, I don't know what happened. Z, he passed the NJ Ask math ... like a miracle. And S passed the reading and did so much better almost passed the math. The point was they were two different children. I think the issue is self esteem, especially with the boys.

I have a little girl this year who was left back by Ms. S (teacher) and she's with me. And if you came into my room and I said pick out the child who was retained last year, I guarantee you'd never pick her ... never! She is one of my top students now. I think we are all finding that, yes. I think that if it's the right like if it really is the right thing for that student, then it's going to work. It really makes a difference. I've found success with that. (Teacher Gr3)

A professional staff member responded:

Well, we are looking at it [retention] differently, because we are looking at it as an intervention that was made. You have some students who are retained and that does help them, because they get that extra year. And you have other students that are retained that are still 3 grade levels below. And we've said to them, that it's better if you retain a student in K or 1st grade. (Professional support staff)

A parent gave his viewpoint about using retention as an intervention strategy:

Even with his retention last year, [my son] D is doing much better this year. When they talked about options, [I said] “No just keep him back!” If I don’t make another decision in his life, that was the best decision I ever made! When I told D that he was going to be retained, he asked me “what does that mean?” I told him that means...It was either straighten up and fly right, or don’t fly at all. That’s not to say that we would not have dealt with [it]. (Parent)

Student-Centered: Parent Perspective About Celebrating Academic Success at BAA

A parent gave his perspective about some of the aspects that he and his child valued about BRICK Avon:

[My son] D has expressed to me that he likes it here more than any other school. I think [my step-children] Z and M they might have become more used to it. Z got invited to his first his first Blue Carpet this year (a special annual student honors ceremony). D received an award for excellence in math at his Blue Carpet, honor the scholar award ceremony. Even with his retention last year, D is doing much better this year. Z is on the honor roll twice, three times this year. M’s lexile scores have gone up 225 points this year.

D has gone up four STEP levels this year. D was in first grade last year. D’s big issue last year was reading. ... there were family issues that left him with a pretty rocky pre-K and K school career. But once he was home with me, I was able to give him a stronger foundation. But I also realized he was not ready for second grade.

He’ll be on second grade level in September. He’s going to summer school There is one thing that all of my children can do and do well. It’s reading. Because that’s one thing that we all do together. (Parent)

Student-Centered: Perspectives About Social and Emotional Needs

A professional support staff shared her perspective about the social and emotional needs of BRICK student and families:

I’m coming from a whole different perspective. I think academically the goals are to provide quality instruction and high standards and then help the children make sure there’s the supports there to, to help the children achieve. And I think that there, that you know, those goals are realistic, they are achievable, we are seeing gains.

But I'm not sure if we have in place all the things, all the supports that we really need to make sure that children are getting what they need. And part of that is not to the fault of BRICK, it's just, it's an enormous thing when you are trying to give holistic support. And you start looking at issues like housing that impact learning, OR, you know drugs and addiction, and poverty and lack of food, and you know, and things of that nature. When you start looking at all that, it's hard for schools to address those issues or to supplement the things that are lacking in a child's life. It's hard, I mean, we do try, we do courses, we do breakfast... you know. We do everything, we do everything but feed dinner, ...except bring in parents to teach them to be better parents, now you know, we don't do that. Is that something we might need to add on later on?

I'm trying to figure out, how could we take those parents of the children who are (pause) chronic behavior problems another thing, and really give those parents the support to be better parents or to better address the issues that their children are having. Because we know that those kids that misbehave the most are crying out for help. So then how do we put that support at home for that child? And that's the very difficult part because we get parents, who... you hear the parent talking and you hear all these discrepancies. And, the standards they say have in their home and then what's actually being produced in the home, in terms of homework. (Professional support staff)

A first grade teacher talks about supporting student development and healthy decision-making:

And while academics are very important, their behavior and the choices they make ... we try to talk about choices a lot. Like you are making a bad choice, how are making a good choice ... those are equally important. So that's something we are working on. But if they were not making good choices ... holding them accountable for their choices and their behaviors. (Teacher Gr1)

One of the para-professional staff members gave her perspective about challenges to teaching presented by student behavior:

The learning environment: I believe we have excellent teachers, but because of the behavior problems, it takes away from the learning environment. I've gone into classrooms that are just, you know, just very comfortable, you know, a nice learning environment conducive to kids just wanting to come because of the comfortable environment in that classroom. But if you have one or two kids that are in that classroom that are disruptive, it can really hold up progress of the rest of the students. So in terms of the environment, with certain students, behavior problems can really distract from that learning environment. .

Sometimes it just takes one. If you can remove that one student, the learning environment can just really jump. I've had a staff members to say, "Oh, so and so was not here today, I was able to accomplish so much with my class!" We have some strong teachers here, Ms. D, for instance, she is very strong. Ms. M comes in, and I had someone who came up to observe, and they shared with me that she knows from the moment that class comes in she knows what they are going to do, and they know what they are going to do, they are automatically on task. And she just goes on with their lesson. When I think about teachers that make a difference, when I think about that wow!

Then you have some classes where the kids come in it's so hard for that teacher, because they come in wired up, and so they spend maybe 10 minutes trying to calm them down. And sometimes they are so wired up, they never get to teach the lesson there. ... You know there are kids in that class that want to learn, and there are just one or 2 that take that away from them.

The security guard described how she often works to support teachers presented with difficult behaviors and an observation she has about school-wide strategies:

They send them out, I have them sit here with me sometimes, go get a book and read, go get some work. Um, I took a kid out class over there because there was a sub, no it wasn't even a sub, but she's been working as a sub... I took the kid out and talked with the kid, I said let's get you working and I put him over there, and he sat there. And I talked with him, and I said, "You have to reward that student, you can't let her get next to you, because who's out of the classroom now, you are. But you are not going to sit here and do nothing, you are going to get your work done."

When they assign these kids to the classroom in September, look to see who you are grouping. You know this one, that one, and this one cannot get along, so they should not be grouped in the same classroom. If they are in seventh grade, we have three seventh grade classrooms, put him in that one, put him in that one, put her in that one. You know they don't even sit in the same class together. This is something that needs to be looked into in terms of grouping some of the worst kids in one classroom. Yeah. (Security staff)

Another professional support staff expressed her perspective about student behavior at BRICK Avon:

They need to address the behaviors of the students a little more intensely than they do. They focus more on the academics. The behaviors classroom management, transitioning in the hallways, that needs to be addressed a little more in this school. Because until you get a handle on that, I mean academics are a big part of it, but until you get a handle on it. (Professional support staff)

The professional staff member seemed to indicate that “getting a handle on student behavior” was a collective work ... it’s adult behavior ... it’s not just student behavior.

A vice principal spoke about student behavior related to student learning styles and how teachers and administrators are addressing issues like students having to sit still for longer 90 minute periods of time:

We have done a lot of work around that, and we have a lot of students who are more active and have had trouble controlling themselves, and teachers have not necessarily adjusted their expectations, not lowered their expectations, but just to say, this child can get this goals but in a different way ... in INRS let the kid stand up to do his work, why does he have to sit, like why can’t he stand up and learn, or let him sit on his legs There’s no reason why he has to sit up straight.

I think that is something that has to be worked on more ... just better understanding the different needs of the child in terms of those children who are more active. That used to come up, but it doesn’t anymore, because teachers have finally started like having those conversations with kids, whereas he needs that whereas he does not need that ... you’re going to have to get over it.

Yeah, but I think, there are also a lot of students who are just ridiculously below level of work that they should be on and being asked to do. So that’s another thing. We have to be moving up their skills, and as we do that their behavior starts to increase. We’ve had quite a few of I&RS cases. where as they’ve got what they needed, their behavior has improved.

And there are some cases where we have recommended to the parent in extreme cases that there is something going on with this child and we are not medical doctors. Perhaps checking in with a doctor is an option. Sometimes the parent says “I don’t know what to do, they do the same thing at home,” and they are just as frustrated as we are about knowing what to do. So I see our job as “OK let’s help you with this process.” So if your child is going to be diagnosed with ADHD and on medication. Sometimes we sit in this office and the parent is very hesitant to put their child on medication, but after trying it, the child went to the top of the class. The same with retention. I just had a conversation with a parent yesterday, a child who was retained went from being at the bottom of the class to being towards the top student in the class, having some of the highest scores on NJASK ... so it’s just tremendous. (Vice principal K-5)

The vice principal spoke about some of the ways that the school was meeting individual student needs. Some involved encouraging and supporting teachers to adjust the classroom to better meet student needs. For example, if a child needs to move around more, can that be built into the classroom for that child and others like him/her? By utilizing the Intervention and Referral Service system, some children's needs were addressed and they were able to make academic progress; and in the process, their behavior improved as well.

A professional support staff gave her perspective on some of the broader issues with making education relevant and meaningful to students, and incorporating project based and experiential learning into the curriculum as a way to ameliorate student behavior problems:

We have assemblies and we wonder why kids can't be quiet. And so I would like to see a whole myriad of things going on in the school, and that would be a good learning environment. ... I would like to see an environment where behaviors can be addressed. So if I'm not the type of kid who can sit down in a traditional classroom setting, and be attentive the whole time, there is somewhere else in this building where I can go to get that, I can work on projects, because that for me is more fruitful. So, I wish our schools were not so much "square pegs." And all I'm trying to do is make you square, You're a triangle, you can't be a triangle, we only have squares here, you can't be a triangle here. I think we try to do differentiated instruction, but I think that's one of those mystery words. They can't really tell you what I hear things like project-based learning, but I don't really see that when I'm hearing what kids are doing in the classroom. To me, the classroom would be more of a laboratory, where you see kids are able to experience learning through a myriad of ways.

So if we are really differentiating, we are not really staying in the building either, because some kids really [need to make it real, like out in the community]. I got that from adult education. Where you have to make it real for them. You know, Mary has to go to the laundramat ... When you give it to them in a real life situation, then it means something. And I think some of our kids are the same way. If we could also take them to the environment.
(Professional support staff)

A dissenting view:

I think the particular ... I don't think that they've figured that out here yet... I think that they are still figuring it out... Yeah, I think they are still figuring it out. I think they want to have discipline. That doesn't mean that anything else changes. They try to ... I mean Mr. P (vice president) is very responsive at text messages if I need [anything]. The responsiveness is huge here, there is definitely that. But as for a long term plan, academics, retaining teachers, In reality, they have it on paper, but in reality it's nonexistent. (Teacher Gr5)

Student-Centered: Social and Emotional Needs and Development of Students Through Curriculum, Teacher Training (Professional Development), and Special Programs and Partnerships

Responsive Classroom Program (K–5) and Developmental Design (6–8)

These were initiatives at BRICK Avon that offered training to teachers and staff around building a positive culture for students and supporting their social and emotional learning. A middle school teacher described the program from her perspective:

They [BRICK] have brought in programs like ... “Developmental Design” ... for the upper grades. It's all about building community and stuff like that. We analyzed a sixth grade child and what they're like and then we analyzed a seventh grade child. And they require movement. So we are trying to incorporate movement, cause you can't just sit there all day long. ... We talked about what was the most engaging lesson that we as learners have ever been involved in...and what it was like. And you know, we were touching upon multisensory.. We were like, if that's how we learned, if that's our best lesson, then we need to bring that to the children, we can't just sit behind a desk or just teach from a book. (Middle school teacher)

An administrator spoke about these curricula and training strategies:

It's not a system, it's more about changing your mindset. It's all in building relationship with kids. They would be behind these ideas like advisories, and they would be behind doing these games ... because it's all about building these relationships with the child. They are going to learn from you because they have this relationship with you. And you also know how they respond for the individualized lesson Yeah. Are the way that groups are grouped They are leveled. Not by college names, but they are leveled.

The middle school administrator continued:

So one of the things that I think was hard when I came in last year, if I can speak transparently When I got on the ground as the administrator, I spent a year trying to support these decisions, but then I remember last summer, I remember saying to my colleagues, “these individualized schedules are not right.” So, I cancelled out the individualized schedules and went back to the college groups, and It’s helped to teach these social skills. But more than that, it took out confusion. (Vice principal 6–8)

The administrator’s comments reflected the difficulties sometimes encountered in balancing individualization and student-centered approaches with student behavior and student capabilities (or lack of) for responsible decision-making and behaviors.

PlayWorks: A Partnership Program Adopted by BRICK Avon to Support Student Behavior

PlayWorks was a partnership program adopted by the administrators at BRICK Avon to help students develop safe and responsible behavior through play and sports, especially employed on the playground, but behavior and skills that were also transferrable to the classroom. The full-time *PlayWorks* coach at BRICK Avon gave his perspective about student behavior and his role:

Oh, yes, I think what happened is, because ... the education has always been here, they have a great staff, so the education has always been great. But then it comes to behavior ... but there their interaction with their classmate and their teacher—their interpersonal skills—is lacking. So that’s where *PlayWorks* [comes in to help].

The *Responsive Classroom* and *Development by Design* ... they also started doing that, that’s where the icebreakers in the morning, so now there is this whole personal development [initiative], so I think that’s really helping the school with [student outcomes]. [Students can have] a random bad day, now it’s more like ... but the names that I know, those students are more long-term projects. Not that they are broken, but they go back to how they normally were.

The *PlayWorks* coach described his role to teach skills to students on the playground during recess/ lunchtime using organized games and cooperative play.

He explained how his work on the playground helps build school culture and affects behavior in the classroom.

It doesn't escalate the way it once did. It's important, because if they are acting out in my yard, they are probably also acting out in class. Verbal disagreements in my recess yard translate to disagreements in the cafeteria, they would translate into fist fights that grew out of those verbal disagreements on the playground.

But now those fights do not happen much anymore.

I think *PlayWorks* is very helpful with like the success is combined with the educational experience... developing them socially, because that's where [they are lacking skills] ...And then by leading them and showing them how to [negotiate socially and emotionally] and by demonstrating the high five and the roshambeau (rock/paper/scissors game).

The *PlayWorks* coach described how he helped influence student behavior and taught positive social skills through actions like “high fives” that students could use in various settings:

Whenever I see things that I want them to do ... my high fives have increased ... And now I'm trying to take it up a level ... So that if they miss the ball, give them a high five and say something positive. Four square, as soon as they're out, they shout “out.” They have to be brief and quick though, because they only get 15–20 minutes. So give them a high five, and high five them out and say something positive.

So now I'm starting to hear more positive words, less “out” and more positive words, like [good try]. So it's a dramatic change from the beginning of the school year until now, um, students are a lot safer. (Coach *PlayWorks*)
(More about *PlayWorks* below)

A middle school teacher shared her perspective about how BRICK Avon faculty and staff members sought to meet the needs of each “whole” child: socially, emotionally and academically:

Emotionally, we all have different relationships with the kids, like we adopt kids, you know. We call them “our sons and our daughters” and stuff. And we take

them kind of under our wing ... like for instance, I'm kind of like ... there's a designated high flyer person So like seems like no one can get through to Stephan it seems like he has this chemistry with me, he's like, "Ms. J, I need to talk to you." So, you know, I'll take time out of my day to talk to him. We do little things for them. We also have people whereas if a child is angry, you know, overly emotional, we have people we can send them to, you know, who have those great relationships with them. You know, so we don't try to It's not about glory, it's not about a power struggle basically with us, it's like, "why don't you go hang out with Ms. S's room cause right now, we don't seem to be jiving right now." You know, it's never like, "get out the room," or, "you're bad." We don't do it like that. It's just, we realize you are 14, you're nuts because your hormones are crazy You know. You are going to be mad.

I had a conversation with a kid who got really angry with me during testing "cause I was like telling him to be quiet. Right now I may be everything but the child of God, but guess what, is that going to stop me from loving you tomorrow?" "NO." "OK well go sit in somebody's classroom until we can be friends again, alright?" And that's it. (Laughs). Then we can be friendly with each other and you know. And you know he started smiling ... and doing what he had to do and the next day there were no grudges held. (Middle school teacher)

A parent reflected that perhaps even more efforts were needed:

Socially, I think we might fall short of that. We have a lot of social programs for our kids, a lot of ELT (Emotional Learning) programs. I think we should have more social programs for our elementary kids. If you can keep kids involved more involved socially To get kids in the mindset of the need to give back to someone, to something. That helps us not only academically, but socially as well. (Parent)

A staff member talked about the staff resources and the team work amongst the adults at BRICK to support the students' and address frequent behavioral issues:

Because there are so many emotional needs of the kids, you know such a large population of kids, leading having emotional problems and needing emotional support. I think they are doing an excellent job. We have a guidance counselor, we have a social worker, we have Ms. B (student/ discipline) um, and just the staff in general, they will take a child and just work with them. If I am having an issue with a student, that's disruptive, you know, having like a melt down. Any staff members intervenes in getting that student and they feel they have a rapport with them, they'll take them, talk with them, take them into their classroom. [They work as a] team, yes, to support the kids. I wish we had more resources to [support the needs of] our kids, to give them a little more counseling. I know Ms. C, as the guidance counselor, she is always taking kids, but she is

overwhelmed along with all the other responsibilities she has. Teachers step up with students who are having difficult times. (Security staff)

Student-Centered: Cultural, Field Trips and Extracurricular Experiences for Student Development

Many of the individuals who were interviewed specifically spoke about field trips and extracurricular experiences as a part of how the BRICK model addresses the needs of the whole child: social, emotional and academic. The following excerpts represent some of those remarks:

A middle school teacher stated:

I know that one of things they are thinking about infusing and doing next year, is having a pre-school in the school. The brain research is very extensive and it only shows that if the synapses are not being fired that they are not being used, and they will lose them. So to kind of get those stimuli in the child's life early. I know that they do try to make sure that our children are culturally diverse, exposing them to many different aspects of life that they normally wouldn't be exposed to. They provide them with 4 trips a year ... every child has the opportunity for 4 trips a year. One group recently went to the Camden Aquarium ... they are going to Harlem this week ... going to Broadway plays. Before I got here, they actually took them on a skiing trip. That was the year before I got here. They try to take the kids ... some of them really don't get a chance to get out of Newark ... to give them a chance to experience part of life ... to develop the whole child. We do have the breakfast program here So to have three meals a day ... breakfast, lunch and snack in the afterschool program.
(Middle school coach)

A professional support staff commented:

I do see well especially on the weekends, there are a lot of field trips and excursions, so there is the exposure ... even bringing people in ... they had an author come in All the 5th graders got to hear from veterans and armed forces. So we tried to get creativity Our clubs ... you know the kids who are doing quilting ... (that's fabulous) but there are so many kids who need more, and they are not getting it. Even karate, it's small, and that's good for the kids in it

She continued:

But how do we try to help parents see how important it is for their kids to stay ...
And then how do we infuse some of that into the classroom? (Professional support staff)

A para-professional staff spoke passionately about a partnership in which students could select three new books to take home:

Did you come when they did the books in the cafeteria? It's great, it was so great! It was set up so nice!! They had it at the End of February or in early March. The kids are going home with the books. We had a grandmother who said, Did you get three books?!, That's new. That's something new. (Security staff)

The *PlayWorks* coach described some of the strategies he used on the playground during recess and in game time with individual classes to help students recognize emotions or confront difficult behaviors:

So I'll say ... "You need to have a seat. Come back when you are ready." And then in that moment I'll say something like, "point to someone who is being respectful today;" "point to someone who was um ran really fast." I'll highlight different things I noticed during the game. Um sometimes I'll say, "Oh, highs and lows. So, share a high that you've had today. Or a low. Or both, share a low that made you sad, or angry, or whatever the emotion is, the extreme of being happy." Some students will only share a low, some will share only one over and over, some students will consistently share highs, some will consistently share lows, some will share both highs and lows. It really just depends on the child. I try to let the discussion flow. Whatever behavior I observe during play, I'll pull that out. Like for instance, at one particular game, the students weren't playing fair. I was like, "How does it feel when another team member on your team cheats? How does it feel when you see on the other team cheats? Does anyone here ever have the urge to cheat. Why did you cheat or why didn't you cheat."

The *PlayWorks* coach continued explaining how he helped teachers and students translate lessons learned on the playground back into the classroom:

And then I try to connect it to the classroom. This part is when the teacher [gets involved. The teacher is there with the students for the class activity] Oh yeah, they [teachers] have to be there. Most of them play, too. When the teacher is playing the games, it's such a great classroom time. Because it builds rapport between the teachers and the students in a very different way. The students get to see their teachers like [playing]. It goes so far with the teachers and the students... the students get to see their teachers like because students think that teachers are like [perfect]. "You know I have feelings"... so when they see their teacher

playing with them, I think it totally changes the dynamics in the classroom time. So the teacher will chime in at this point and talk about class. So he or she will just naturally do this portion of the discussion for me. Just jump right in, naturally, “Yeah remember when we were in class.” So they are saying, “yeah remember when we were in class.” Just having the discussion, the class game time should translate back into class time, and the class time should relate to game time and recess. So think respect, sportsmanship ... should all translate into the class.

And the rules. These unconscious rules Now the students don’t even think about it. They just line up. Other ways, oh, class game time is also a time for teachable moments. So through [that], I have discussions about life skills, and what it means to work as a team, what it means, like whatever behavior I observe for that class forms our discussions. Because we play a few games and then at the end we have discussions about feelings.

It’s also a time when I get to learn. Cause recess is just a lot of kids, it’s just mass. With game time [and a class activity], I can relate to each child in a very different way. Sometimes I’ll sit in on teachers’ class and just observe.

When they are in instruction, I’ll sit in on that teacher’s class. But even if the teacher approaches me and says could you help me out with this particular student or this behavior ... I’ll sit in on the class and I’ll watch the student and the class. ... It depends on what the child needs ... [a class observation] It happens about twice a week, and it depends on the [situation and the class dynamics] Like once I was in a class for about two weeks. (*PlayWorks* coach)

Asked if he noticed positive changes in student behavior on the playground, the

PlayWorks coach stated:

Oh, yes, absolutely, like if I compare [student behavior] this week to last week it’s completely incremental, but if I compare it to September, it’s totally, totally different. (*PlayWorks* coach)

Community Engagement and Partnerships

The *PlayWorks* coach described the challenges associated with building positive social and emotional skills in the school setting, in a neighborhood environment full of negative forces and influences.

I think it’s really ... if could change the dynamics if I could change the environment that the school is around ... so Avon Ave ... the neighborhood ... like Rose Terrace, Bergen ... those streets are really hot streets Like today I

had my middle school recess and I noticed that I had more gang members standing at the gate and observing the boys. And I observed it again today, and they have been here for at least three recesses. But they really target the middle school boys, cause they are graduating and they really try to pull them in. And they are aware that we are aware, because when I looked at them talking together they walked away. And as the weather gets warmer ...

Because I've seen these children really change, and their respect, and it's not just me, and I feel that a lot of that change has been due to teachers, to parent involvement, to programs, to me ... I mean all that work and the gang members, they can literally destroy it. And that really bothers me. These children ... It's what they see and observe. And I don't really know what the school can do about that. The school has done a lot to reach out to parents. (*PlayWorks* coach)

Student-Centered: Children with Special Needs

The professional support staff for students with special needs at BAA talked about some of the realities, the strategies and the challenges working with cognitively challenged and students with IEP's at BRICK Avon:

I'm only one person, and I tell you I'm case managing 80 kids in this building. That's a lot of kids. There are 50 kids—maybe 52—cause we just classified 2 more, students that are already classified with an IEP. They could be in mainstream, they could be altogether in a separate classroom..Out of the 50[who are classified as special needs], I'd say give or take there's 7 maybe in the general ed (mainstreamed) without being pulled for the resource room.

The professional support staff continued to explain support given to students given extra support through the resource room:

It's like, in the younger resource room, they are usually in there longer Ms. Day is the resource room for the upper grades..and what Mr. P and we've been doing she has been doing push-in for part of it in math and then pull-out language arts. So in the morning she's doing math push in, and then in the afternoon, she is doing I think 90 minutes for pull outs in language arts.

And the younger group students, Grades 2–5, they are generally in the resource room for 90 minutes for literacy. And they seem to be, not all of them, but some of them, lower, as far as grade level. So they need more support. Plus she can't do it, she can't be in the classroom and [doing pull outs all at once] ... she's only one person. Mr. P (vice principal) and I were talking about that last week, about trying to get another special education teacher for next year so that we could do more push in and more inclusion in the classroom.

The child study team leader explained that resource room and other supports are tailored to each student, as appropriate. Some may need the resource room intervention for only one subject. In addition to the approximately 55 students at BRICK Avon who were classified with special learning needs, there were also another 50 students referred for assessment by the child student team through the Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) process.

Yes, and we have a couple of students who are stronger math, that are in the general ed for math and just going into the resource room for language arts.

Well, we've gotten 40 something referrals ... so it's probably closer to 50 referrals. Some we said, you know what they need to go back and have some more interventions, and they need to continue, the students have been making progress We had one the other day, and we said, "wow, he's made progress! He doesn't need to be referred." So he should go back, and they should continue to do these interventions and make progress. (Professional support staff)

The child study team social worker described the challenge for BRICK Avon and other schools in addressing student needs according to state law and district mandates:

So we have students ... [an IQ of] 69 and below is considered cognitively impaired ... so if you have a student that is 71, that is close but (not low enough to classify. Still), the student needs modifications and accommodations, and differentiated learning, and whatever supports [are available]. But is the student going to make that progress? NO, they are not.

Now are you saying is that student truly learning disabled? The student is a slow learner. And that is part of the problem. You are classifying students that are not learning disabled, they are slow learners.

So we have a student that we are now testing. He has an IQ of 71. He does not meet the criteria for learning disability. But he has very, very low language skills, So we were like "OK, we're going to have to have the speech therapist test him, to see if he meets the criteria for communication impaired. Because otherwise, what am I going to do with him?" Sometimes people have classified students in this category as learning disabled but they are really not. The district really needs to address this issue.

The child study team leader referred to the challenges in assisting students with cognitive disorders or low learning skills to transition to high school and vocational training:

Right, and that's the challenge that I face with my cognitively impaired students, because they are 7th and 8th grade. Ms. C's class. They are on anywhere from a K to a 3rd grade reader [level], but the comprehension, and the daily living skills, or the social skills are not there. (Professional support staff)

A parent with a son diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) talked about her experience as a parent with a son with special needs at BRICK Avon:

The doctor that we were seeing for a year, she identified him. Because she said, ... she felt like she was going to identify him as having ADHD anyway, but she didn't want to wait because we were moving ... So [we had] her report when she sent us here ... she wanted him to get services. So we came into the school at 13th Ave with special PreSchool services. And we came into this school knowing that he had ADHD ... but I was just learning, and I think the school was trying to feel out what was good for him. [Here at BAA] Ms. Collins [K] was excellent. ... But he has ADHD, and I'm OK with that., so I've had to educate myself on it.

But, I see it as a parent, I saw what was going on ... So, it helped to have that support. I didn't want him going to a special school. I wanted him in general education ... [not] in therapeutic. And the school listened to me. And the child study team worked with me. Yeah. (Parent, son Gr2)

Brief Summary and Analysis

BRICK's Strategic Plan (2012) places the needs and development of the whole student at the center of the mission. "In order to close the achievement gap the whole student must be addressed: academic, physical and emotional health, and character development" (BRICK 2012–2017 Five Year Strategic Plan (2012)) (Appendix C).

Teachers, parents, administrators and staff members all spoke about how developing the whole child—socially, emotionally, and academically—were central to their efforts together at BRICK Avon. The social and emotional needs of the children

often affected their academic performance. Children came to school with many needs which the school tried to address in order to assist students to become better students. Behavior issues were challenging but were being addressed through formal and informal strategies and initiatives.

The *Responsive Classroom* and *Development by Design* were curricular initiatives which involved training teachers and staff to utilize daily strategies and structures which supported social and emotional development and strengthened a cooperative learning environment. Strategies included a daily opening circle time for the younger grades and advisement groups for the older students. Partnerships and program support such as *PlayWorks* helped to strengthen students' social and emotional development and decrease fights at the school, especially on the playground. Incentive and rewards systems such as BRICK Bucks, and celebrations like the annual Blue Carpet honors event added reinforcement to these efforts. Additional clubs and field trips added to experiential learning and strengthened student development and learning at BRICK Avon. Activities led by teachers and partners such as the quilting club, yoga, Saturday tutoring, double dutch team and basketball team all added to whole student development at BRICK Avon.

Building Relationships

Working to build relationships between school faculty and students and families was cited as a key characteristic at BRICK Avon by most of those interviewed.

One middle school teacher, who was called a strong veteran teacher by others who were interviewed, stated:

Well I think here at BAA, it's really important to have a good relationship with the students, um, to help them invest in the value of education, um, and you definitely have to develop um a sense of respect with the students, where they respect you and you respect them. ... I think if you have not established that type

of relationship with the students, you will have a difficult time managing a class here, because our students, sometimes can be a little bit overwhelming, a little bit rambunctious. And they certainly can be disrespectful once you establish some expectations and you're consistent with them, students walk into your classroom and they know what they are expected to do. (Middle school teacher)

A veteran teacher who became an administrator at BRICK Avon stated:

To me it's obvious. If you don't love children, this is not the job for you. ... So I could never really see myself as anything other than an advocate for children.

So my strategy is just listening to the kids, hearing them out, and knowing the community. ... A lot of the kids, they rely on me, or they talk to me because they look at my face, and they're like "Ok, she's black, and she knows where I am coming from. She's not going to call DYFS. You know, because these parents teach these kids to not tell anything. So I have to let them know, you know, I hear you. Some of them are hungry, most of them, when they come here, and you just have to use what you know about the community that you are in. ... If you get to know the community, you are a part of their family. Like I took a kid home just now ... I said, "Mommy's going to be mad, but not at you So then that gave him some power. So then you have to know the community. And those are my strategies, just getting to know ... and listen.. (Teacher/dean of students)

The *PlayWorks* coach at BRICK Avon reflected:

I think it comes down to, BRICK Avon utilizes this community based model, and sometimes you need more than one adult to get through to this child. And I know that works really well, it's just getting everyone on board. It depends on the child because there are so many hands involved that want to help this child, and sometimes you do not always see the results you want to see with this child and that's frustrating because there are so many people invested in this.

Parents also mentioned how they valued teachers' and administrators' availability to parents and the experience those professionals bring to BRICK Avon. One parent said:

Well maybe besides the teachers, which is a huge thing. The principal and vice principals. We have the staff. Mr. Lee, If I have a problem I can always go talk to him. (Parent)

Another parent stated:

There are a number of things that make BRICK strong. One thing that makes BRICK strong is its support, its outside support, outside resources.

Then we have the teachers. Without veteran teachers like Ms. B, Ms. R, Mr. H. ... That makes a big difference, because without a strong veteran staff, if they did not have strong veteran teachers, they would not be able to sustain.

Well when I say veterans, I don't necessarily mean that they have just taught at Avon, I mean overall. One of the teachers here used to teach at [other schools]. Another thing is our principal, she used to be in the classroom. Nothing better than having a supervisor that knows where you've been. (Parent)

Building Relationships: Transiency and its Challenge to Building Relationships

A middle school teacher and coach described her frustration with the large rate of mobility and transience of students at BRICK Avon:

We have a very high transient population here. We have students coming in... yesterday, we got three new kids in the middle school alone, and one of the students had 2 siblings in the elementary level. One student was from a charter school and the other two were from New York. It's very difficult. We've recently begun to track students here ... we believe that the students who have been taught here at BRICK Avon are doing much better than those who are transferring in... It becomes difficult for us to see if what we are doing is working. I teach and I teach and I teach And then the scores come back and what progress is there? Sometimes for me last year, more than 30% of the kids were not at BRICK Avon at September.

I think that is what is very difficult ... It's just the nature of where the school is located and there are so many things about charter schools ... but the idea that they can take a child and a child not perform the way they want them to perform, or a parent does not do what they said they would commit to in a certain amount of time, or that a child is just not performing, and that they can literally say, "OK I'll take you," and take the thousands of dollars that comes with that child, but not deliver. And now the child comes back to the public school ... And that child has not benefitted from whatever was taught at that [charter] school rather the sending school results show up on the receiving school's test results. We have started to asses a child at entry. (Middle school teacher/coach)

The security guard stationed at the school's front door described her perspective of student transience at BRICK Avon:

What happens that I see quite often, parents transfer their kids out because unfortunately their behavior problems, and they blame the school. And they think that if they move their child to another school, they'll do better or the school will not call them as much. And what we see a lot of is a child may go to a charter school, and charter schools don't tolerate behavior problems. And [then parents] are bringing them back. We had about 3 kids within the past month that were

former students that are back here ... from a charter school. Well this one particular kid, he went to a charter school, and mom took him out, and he went to a school in Irvington, and now he is back. He was a problem, he was a problem, and now he's back.

Another I believe what's going on, I had a parent come tell me "my sister said that this is an excellent school, and excellent school! And I want my kids in this school." Because if you go online, I think this might be listed as charter. A lot of parents think this is a charter school. BRICK Avon Academy. So a lot of parents want their kids in BAA ... because of the extended day, because of the things that are going on, you know? the afterschool program, you know your kid is here until 5:30, with the karate, the dance, you know?

Yes, [I believe parents are seeking a school like BRICK Avon] so we get a lot of new students. In one month, we see maybe 5–6 new kids come in. Not as many going out though. No, we don't have as many going out. More coming in. And then they move out of the neighborhood, and then they come back to the neighborhood, for whatever reasons I don't know. But I do know that one of the biggest reasons is because they don't make it outside of Avon. And they come back. Yes, they have the address, so we have to accept them. A lot of that, the kids coming back. (Security staff)

The principal commented that despite the student transiency, the most important thing was to build relationships with parents to show the commitment of the administrators and school community to students and parents, and the loyalty parents developed to the school because of this:

So one thing as far as transient rate is just that transient rate is just going to happen. But I think that one thing that we can do and that we have been doing, I think that when a child and a family are committed and they see that we are committed ... So this morning before school, I saw two fifth graders walking in the wrong direction. So I said to one of the fifth graders, OK let's keep going to your house. So I walked all the way home with her. Her grandmother told the child, "Don't you tell me that the school doesn't care, I've never heard of a school where the principal walks up three flights of stairs ... it's you, it's you that [has the problem]."

And so last year, and seriously, I know it's not allowed, but I got parents that clearly take the bus over here to get here because maybe they moved somewhere else, but they say, "uhuh, that child is are still going here."

Last year I had an eighth grader, he took a subway and two buses to get here ... and he was here every day, and I know because I used to drive him home.
(Principal)

Building Relationships: Brief Summary and Analysis

The building of relationships and the quality of relationships at BAA appeared to be something that was taken seriously by administrators, teachers, staff and parents. Teachers took time to know the children in their classes. The middle school teachers worked together to address behavior and maintaining relationships and safe spaces for adolescents who presented a larger challenge (as reflected in the last section about student-centered and behavior). The administrators were often placing encouraging messages and surprises on teachers' doors or desks at the beginning of a day to show their appreciation for their efforts. Teachers made an effort to be available to their students, even in out of school hours. Student and family transiency rates at BAA increased the challenge to build positive relationships that would support student development. Some of the factors underlying family mobility were issues that school staff might become aware of and involved in, such as domestic violence or eviction, as was further described by the attendance counselor in the section below about parental engagement. The efforts and strategies that were used to build relationships with parents will be addressed further in the next section (after Student Outcomes).

Parental Engagement and Partnership Strategies to Support Student Achievement at BRICK Avon

Parents' Perceptions about the School Environment

The next section about school climate is fairly brief. It is directly tied into the first section about a healthy school environment.

Staff and parents emphasized their perception of a welcoming and “open door policy” at the school. The parent liaison stated:

Whereas *some* principals say they *want* the parents here, they *say* they want the parents here, but then their actions show me, tell me, that they don’t want the parents here. They don’t speak to them, they don’t have an open door policy. You say “get them in here,” but then when they get here what are we going to do with them, are they going to sit up in my room all day? You don’t want them. Well then, what’s the purpose of parent involvement if you don’t want them? ... [Here] I see that parents are more involved. The parents that are here everyday, those are the parents that just love to volunteer (laughs). (Support staff)

A parent stated:

[This school helps and supports parents with] “an open door policy where they can come in any time they want, as long as they are not disrespectful [A strength of this school besides the teachers is] the principal and vice principals ... and Mr. Lee. If I have a problem I can always go and talk to him ... The parent liaison, she has an open door policy as well, we have different workshops. I’ve attended nearly all of them.

(Parent of 2 middle school children and active school volunteer)

Another parent who volunteered at the school almost every day gave her perspective about the school and what it meant to her:

I like this school, there are a LOT of nice people ... I totally get along well with just about everyone here. I get along with a lot of kids. You have your flies here and there, they buzz back, but then you have a lot that are good for you. A lot of them look for me and I like it that a lot of them look for me, Because a lot of them call me “Mom.” So that’s what I like about this school. There are a lot of people that look for me. I missed [volunteering on] Monday, and Mr. P said, “who told you you could take a day off?”

I especially love running the BRICK buck store. There is girl who doesn’t talk. I explained to her, when you see something you like, point to it. So she points to everything she wants, and if she doesn’t have enough, I try to save it for her.”

(Parent and volunteer) (Spanish-speaking, one child has severe sight disability; both children experienced bullying at BAA).

Parent Workshops

BRICK Avon had many parent workshops at the school. One type of parent workshop was for self care and family support and management. These workshops were

offered weekly by the parent liaison staff in the Parents' Room, usually during the school day. These workshops were generally held weekly or bi-weekly and were generally attended by 6 to 12 parents, in a small group setting. The topics ranged from activities that focused on personal goals (making a visioning board), to child discipline, to mental health and well-being.

The other major type of parent workshop offered by the school was academic in nature, generally led by the reading or math coach for certain grade levels. These workshops were generally offered after school and attended by 15–50 parents. These were centered on language arts and math programs and goals at the school and how parents could support their child's achievement in these areas. Activities and materials at these workshops were very hands-on.

Parents were asked in interviews if they attended any of these workshops.

One parent said:

[I have attended] some of them. Yes, but because I work I cannot attend those during the day, and sometimes even the ones in the evening I just can't. Like last night there was a workshop about summer school, but I was so tired I just went home and went to sleep. You know, if I'm not working, sometimes the workshops are at 11 am, and there's not much I can do, I'm working. And even then, I get off at 4:15 and get home at 5:30 with travel time. (Parent of 3 children at BAA)

A staff member stated:

They had a reading workshop one day afterschool downstairs in the rec [room] ... and I went downstairs ... standing room only, it was packed!! We were so excited! It was K–4th maybe? I'm not sure if it was reading, I think it was Ms. Johnson. Ohhh. We took pictures, you should have seen the parents down there with their kids, it was really something to see! We were really excited! Did they have the math ... I'm not sure how the math turned out, but Ms. Johnson did the reading, reading with their children ... and they really turned out. (Security staff)

The staff liaison talked about the challenges of involving parents and changes in community relationships:

My greatest challenge is trying to reach my middle school parents ... they don't participate on like a volunteer basis. ... this neighborhood has changed, whereas the parents who used to attend this school and their children are now coming. I think basically all of them are gone. This is like a whole new generation who I don't know and they don't know me. ... So it's definitely a transitional neighborhood, where the students that used to attend Avon Ave [School] have grown up and they have moved out; or if they're here it might be their grandson or granddaughter that attends the school. (Support staff)

As shown on the surveys, teachers worked hard to build relationships with parents of the children in their classes. One middle school math teacher reflected:

So in terms of parents, we have the whole gamut here. A lot of times when people ask me about teaching in the South Ward of Newark they make some snap judgments. But I say no, I have the whole range of parents.

I have very engaged parents, smart, do everything for their child, show up at every conference, will call and ask why didn't you call and let me know about this. This school is very much a neighborhood school. Meaning you can get in your car now, and you can drive and see kids and families on the streets, right here. Everyone knows each other. We do those community barbeques, the talent shows get a huge turnout, it was actually a smaller turn out this year than last year; the basketball games. The group I have this year, we have had excellent conferences. I don't know what I can attribute it to. This year my students in general have been more academically engaged, their parents are more engaged, more responsive. They have been here longer at BRICK, They all come from stronger fifth grade teachers. I can see those things trickling through.

The teacher continued, talking about strategies to build teacher–parent relationships:

I have about 70 students. 75–80 parents. I don't have all of their numbers in my phone, but quite a few of them. Maybe now that I'm in my second year here, they know who I am. A lot of times they know more about Avon than I do. Our school does a lot to reach out. They have those phone blasts. Like "make sure you do your summer packets," they do a lot to reach out. We tried to do the workshops, but we have not had as much success with that. The lower grades have had more success with that than we have.

We had 60–70% [of the sixth grade parents] at the first conference. That was just from letters, no calls. That kind of drops off. We do have parents that it's hard to reach. Starting with a face to face meeting is always best. Starting with positive communication is always best. I do always ask them if they can come in so we can meet face to face, it seems to help break down walls. Some of my parents text. They like that. They may not like calls. You kind of have to feel that out, person to person. Some teachers don't even feel comfortable giving out their

phone numbers. Little things like snow days, NJASK, tutoring tonight ... texts can be sent out. (Middle school teacher Gr6)

The principal pointed to texting between herself and individual parents and spoke about parent relationships and communications:

This is partnership. So T. was retained [last year] because her STEP level was so low. [This year] T. just told me that she just made step 4. I am so proud of her!

Principal's text to parent: "I'm so proud of her too, could you let her know, I would tell her myself but I have the flu."

Parent's text to principal: "no problem ... Tell Ms. D her teacher thanks, cause she is doing her thing."

So this is parent partnership. So I don't need a parent to come and get everyone else's child...just get your child ... Just care about your child! [And] the grandmother ... [is now telling others] that school is the best school ever. That's partnership. (Principal)

The vice principal for grades 6–8 expressed a desire to do more to engage parents:

But I need to do a much better job, personally, and I think as a school, we need to do a better job. Right now, I still feel like we are calling on parents more ... like we've built in a lot of parent workshops this year. But I still feel like we just call on parents more either for like news, whether good or bad, or like assistance, but I don't feel like it's a genuine partnership in terms of Like how are we helping them ... We need to do a much better job. ... We need to do a much better job of having better communication and better relationship with parents. (Vice principal 6–8)

A parent talked about his own engagement and volunteer work at BAA:

Now, I'm here Monday through Friday from 7:30—4:15 (laughs) or longer. Last year we did a Black History fundraiser for the K students. We raised \$2,000 doing a fashion show. This year I worked with Ms. S's class raising money for the Associated Humane Society of Newark. I've been trying to help raise money for some of our extracurricular activities But this year I've been in the classroom more than I've ever been before. I've donated a lot of my time and resources. I run a social media management and video production company. ... We've actually been producing videos for Avon since my son was in K. So for five years now, because he's in the 4th grade. (Parent and part time staff)

A staff member spoke about changes in the cohesiveness of the neighborhood and parents responses and relationships with the school:

When I went to school, my mother was on the PTA, she came to meetings ... I know if they called her, she was [there]. Now, it's a whole new breed. ... The village is not a village any more. When I came it was a village. And you are always going to have some [parents]. "I don't care what my child does ... my child is never wrong." But now there is more. And less of the other. ... So much has gone on, and not just in the educational system ... we no longer can discipline children. Where's the discipline? Basically you tell the child, "Do what you want to do, when you want to do it." And they threaten to take away the child. So they don't discipline, they don't do what needs to be done. But I can't say anything to her, I can't do anything to her. (Security)

Another staff member talked about different parental attitudes with the school:

So yeah, the area, the parents, unfortunately, the parents are more combative, you know they are younger parents, they come in, you know they are just not really too cooperative, at times, you know. I would say a small percentage. More of them come in, they know us, they work with us, but you still have a percentage. Yeah, There are more than are cooperative than less. But when you get one, you forget about all the others. You have to say, OK it's just one, it will be OK, because the next 10 coming in, they'll be OK, so you just have to get through this one And then the next one will come in and say, "hello, how are you?" and it takes your mind off of the one that just came in and spoke so rudely, or complained about you know because it's new ... you know. (Security staff)

A parent who was actively involved reflected upon parents' involvement with the school:

Parents have to be more involved. The culture of parenting has to change as well. Because there is no way that any school in this district that should have more parents coming out for cell phones—for getting cell phones returned than for parent teacher conferences. I think that is the case everywhere. There is not a school in the district where this is not a problem (and) who does not complain about this. Unless you are a North Star where parent involvement is mandated ... I can't wait for the day when we can say our parents are our greatest strength! That's a two-sided coin at least right? If we can get 50 parents together to talk about the paint color in this place we would be doing awesome! The culture of parenting has to change. If Ms. D. called me to tell me that (my son) is acting a fool in the classroom, I'm coming in to deal with (him) in the classroom where he is acting the fool, not waiting until after he gets home. I'm coming to deal with it now, and nip it in the bud. Next thing you know, nothing has happened! There's no discipline. NO! But you have to be a part of the change you want to see in the world ... have to be a better parent to have a better child. (Parent)

The vice principal for K–5 reflects on some strategies used to engage parents at BAA:

Ms. J (the parent liaison) works a lot with like getting parent workshops together. We've put a brochure together. I haven't been happy with the turnout. Some of them are better (turnout) than others. That is one way we are engaging parents. But I think parent workshops are one way we do that. I try to have teachers during conferences giving parents those workshop brochures. I'm not certain how well that is happening. We give the teachers the parent conference brochures, so what I always imagine is after the conference, give them the brochure, circle the workshops that they should go to, like let them have that. We found that being more strategic about who we are targeting... about reaching out to specific parents individually and to personally invite them. I think that makes a difference. That means more than throwing a flier into a book bag and hoping and praying that someone shows up. I have not been very satisfied with our parent overall engagement. I think we really are quick to call parents in when their kid is naughty, they got in a fight. So, I think that we've done some things to debunk the myth about school because a lot of our kids' parents went to Avon Ave School, so there is a history. I don't think that they see it as a school in some cases, they may not know any better. Now it's OK, we want their behavior to be good, and we also want to help you to be more effective in working with your child at home ... other than that, the robo-calls. (Vice principal K–5)

We've started the newsletters this year (they are really good). That was something I really wanted to work on as a school. I wanted to tackle a school newsletter, and there are the submissions for the first one, but then that got out of my hands, but that never happened. (Too much, yeah, but I like the grade level ones.)
(Vice principal K–5)

Parental Engagement: Communications

A parent talked about the importance of an engaged school leader who engaged parents:

I like the fact that you have a principal you can go to and she *remembers* ("Yeah!" another parent standing nearby agrees). Some people you can go to and talk to you are talking and you can tell that they are not listening ... or they may be listening and they are trying to remember. So you talk to the principals ... first of all they know the children's names, and they relate to them. You have kids that run up to the principals, hugging, you know. That tells you something. I like the fact that you can talk to them, and communicate your concerns. You are not made to feel that you are *just* the parent, you don't really know, but it all works together, you know. They all work together, I like that. It's one thing to have a child that you are already worried about and then to have the school to help you with that, with your concerns, that's good. ... and the child study team, too.
(Parent of 2nd grader)

One parent spoke about his relationships with his children's teachers:

All the fourth grade teachers are starting to realize what a pain my stepson is. My stepdaughter, all of the teachers love her. And Ms. D knows [my son]. She's gone through all his growing pains with him. I know what most of the trials and tribulations that the teachers go through. So, you know, sometimes I can empathize and sympathize with them. Ms. D and I, we have a great relationship. ... The x grade teachers not so much ... Ms. C and I have always had a great relationship. You have Mr. U, Ms. M, and Ms. S, the clique, they're the "homies." We communicate with one another. Also the resource teacher, Ms. W. (Parent)

A parent was asked about the strengths and weaknesses of school communication with parents:

That robo-call system we have here. What is it called? The Chalkboard? That computer system is *ineffective*, a waste of money. The worst thing that the school has ever bought. Because unless you have someone dedicated to working to update the system. Because if I as a parent have three children in the building and my information may change consistently depending on what my home situation is...phone number and address ... that kind of thing. But me, the person I am, I'd be collecting addresses and telling parents on line how hard headed their kids are.

There should be a way that we could have a BAA app where a parent could open up an app and see if their child has detention ... Who doesn't have a SmartPhone? Or workshops ... It's simple YouTube ... live time maybe I can block out 45 minutes from home or work. Maybe if there's a way to take control and harness the power of the internet and social media, we could do better. (Parent)

Another parent explained the importance of teacher-parent communication, especially as a parent with a special needs child. Although she was critical of the teacher, she also demonstrated the importance of the parent's agency to initiate and communicate with the teacher for her child's benefit.

Maybe at the beginning of the year, the teacher and the parent should get together to come up with a plan before it's so far in the year. And the teacher should have to be educated on what the teacher is dealing with as far as [the IEP] ... and they should want to help.

At the beginning of the year, I called the meeting. Because at this point, I don't feel the teacher has connected with my child, honestly. It has gotten a little better.

I think he's—my son—is doing pretty well overall, but I still don't think the teacher understands what he is dealing with. Sometimes, I feel he is not even willing to maybe even learn more, or...what I'll say is some teachers have it and some teachers don't. Some teachers deal with children better with certain needs and some teachers should not have children with certain needs in their class. I'm not saying that they are not a good teacher... but that's how I feel about that. I think ... they should be more educated in that or [be] more willing to be educated in that.

A meeting at the beginning of the year is good for any child, and especially when you have a classroom full of children that may not be identified but clearly you can see that they have some issues. There should be a plan put in place for each child, even if they are not [classified as special needs]. Not [a meeting] in the middle of the year, let's try this for the next half. It's pointless to me. I think it should start good, start off working together.

(Parent of 2nd grader with an IEP in an all male classroom)

The founder and director of BRICK responded to a question about how he saw parent engagement and how it was going in Year 3 at BRICK Avon Academy:

I think it's going pretty well. Parent engagement is pretty much focused on helping parents understand on what we are doing and how parents can help at home. And here are the resources to do this at home. So Wilson is our phonics program, so with parents can you work with your child at home with the phonics. At the workshop the parents received actual Wilson fundamentals materials to use at home to reinforce with their child/ren. So it's pretty much being like that. Here's what we are doing at school, here's what you can do at home, here are the resources.

Asked if he felt that information was reaching most of the parents, the founder and director responded:

I think it's a mixture. We are no where near where we need to be. But probably 40–50% of parents are being reached.

Parental Engagement: Attendance

Attendance has been placed under the subheading “Parental Engagement” because the actions regarding student attendance most directly involve communications and legal actions between the school and the parents/guardians. In an interview with the

BRICK Avon attendance counselor, this staff member explained how poor attendance triggers another legal form of intervention with students and their families.

Attendance is the key. Attendance is the first thing that changes with students when there are problems in the home. So we try to catch it early ... prevention so to speak.

The staff member gave a brief background of attendance policy and law:

Each school has a different environment. There is a process called the 763, that's been there [a part of public school law and policy] for many, many years. That is supposed to alert the attendance counselor. That is supposed to be generated by the teacher, or any other staff member. They are supposed to notify me if there are 3 consecutive absences, or any pattern of absences, Friday and Monday, every Wednesday, etc. Now we have an automated system and I can go in [to PowerSchool] and track them. I can also go in and change an absent to a late. In PowerSchool, I can see for myself, who has been absent.

The staff member gave an explanation of the intervention she is responsible for:

I should run a report at least once a week to see which students were absent. I usually make a phone call. If they were absent 3 days in a row, unexcused, it's the law to send a letter. They must correct the attendance problem within five days. It's like a summons. Because you go to court, but it doesn't help the family. So I usually schedule a meeting with them. So before the court date, we have a pre-trial meeting, and let's have the team—with the parents and the team. The team is the guidance counselor, the social worker, the parent liaison, the child study team if necessary, the administrator, and if possible, the teacher. But, we are there for attendance, not academics, however we can see that correlation in Power School. I can see the academic connection. High attendance, low grades. And the parents need to see that connection.

For example, a child was behind. And she repeated K, and she had made progress in every period except for one. And that was the first period of the day, language and literacy. And that was because she was late and she was missing it. So I was able to show how the child had improved in everything except literacy ... what's going on here? Then the parent has a revelation. Oh my God, it's my fault. That's so much better than my just telling her.

The counselor continued to explain the attendance policy:

[Unexcused absences ... 10 days ...]So the district policy is that absent for 10 or more days, unexcused, they must go to court. They get a lot of days off with holidays, etc. The hardest months are March, April, May, and June. They are out of school enough, to come to school every day.

So if I see an attendance problem, I'll go ahead and fill out a 763 myself, I won't wait for the teacher to send it. So with the 763, it will go to court. The letter says that, if they miss the pretrial, they will go. But if they have a legitimate excuse ... homeless, moved and notices not forwarded. "I didn't get my mail," that's a valid excuse. The judge is mostly there to support and assist the family. You are talking about mostly single parents... with little to no money. You going to fine them? If they don't pay it, then you are going to send them to jail?... The parents usually come back and tell you what happened [in court]. The parents know that they are going to court, because the school and everybody else has already been involved. They don't usually get angry, because the school is doing everything they can to support the family. If they have 10 unexcused absences they are going to court. But they have time, before they go, to work with the school to put a plan in place to correct or improve the situation. But if they refuse to cooperate, or they don't work to correct the situation, they will go to court. And they could go to jail.

The attendance counselor spoke about the problem of student transience at BRICK Avon:

[New students] They come in every day... out of town, out of state, from all over, even this late in the school year. It could be a domestic problem, it could be for safety reasons. To move out of state, there may be a real problem. It could be a domestic issue. That could be a sign that there is a problem. And how many times did they move? Then you have to determine is this the real parent? You know, days are different, we don't know. Is this the real parent. So that's why we need to screen these (new) parents when they come in the door.

Outreach by the attendance counselor often uncovered other social problems that a child's family might be facing and that may require further support or intervention. The attendance counselor talked about BRICK Avon's team approach for each child and family:

We also find that people are living with other people, they've been evicted. They're homeless. They may have been in jail.

You find all kinds of things out. And it's also helpful that the social worker is there to deal with the social aspect and the guidance counselor. So they are really getting the benefit of meeting with the school staff. But a lot of times, the family did not know. They just thought it was punitive. You get to know the parent. If the child has a problem, it probably started long before the child got to K. The parent might not read, the parent might not have graduated from HS, the parent might not value education. The parent is learning right along with the student. That's the example of the parent with the child being late and struggling with LAL ... she didn't graduate from high school, herself.

So when the older sibling can't help and the parents can't help the child at home [with their school work], so now we are talking about the kid not wanting to come to school. When you talk to the parent, the parent says, "I don't know how to help my child, it looks like a foreign language to me." OK we got that, now the teacher is involved, let's give the parent some tools to deal with that. And now the child is ready to come to school, because they got a little help, and now they can participate and they want to come to school now, and they want the big bucks and go to the (BRICK bucks) store. (Support Staff)

Parental Engagement Summary and Analysis

Excerpts from the administrators indicated a couple of points. The principal was working very hard with administrators, teachers, and staff to build relationships with individual children and parents. This includes setting up systems that track each student's needs and progress in order to help support positive student outcomes. The principal knew and communicated with her students and their parents as individuals. The founder and director spoke about the school's efforts to inform parents about what happens in school/class and what parents can do to support those goals and activities at home in out of school hours. (Taken by itself, the founder's excerpt might make the school's goals for parental outreach seem one-sided, however, the founder/director was also very involved in building partnerships and funding that addressed needs of children and families, especially those challenged by basic needs—health and mental health, housing, nutrition, safety.) The vice principals confirmed that many strategies were used to make connections with parents, and to make invitations to participate as personal and individual as possible.

Excerpts from the interviews with parents support the survey results that parents felt overwhelmingly positive about the administrators and the teachers at BAA. Parents felt very strongly that the administrators know and care deeply for their children—"they know their names." Overall, parents seemed to be mostly positive about BAA. A

majority of the parents who were interviewed were deeply involved at the school as volunteers, so they represented parents who were most engaged.

Interviews with BAA staff members showed a more generalized reflection of some of the challenges encountered with building meaningful partnerships with parents, many of whom had daily struggles, often related to basic needs. The parent liaison indicated an “open door” culture that welcomed parents and sought to engage them in meaningful ways. The liaison and the vice principal indicated challenges faced in reaching and engaging parents of middle school students. The security guard indicated that some parents are difficult (“combative”) from the moment they come to the door, despite the staff’s effort to be polite and respectful.

Another guard seemed to indict a whole group of younger parents as a different breed from her generation, more selfish and defensive. The attendance counselor offered a look at parents whose lives are focused on issues and activities that do not place their child(ren)’s attendance as a first priority until they are engaged through litigation. She explained how she and other staff members of the school seek to use the law to educate and inform parents and to help them see how the importance of their child(ren)’s attendance and being on time connects to the child’s performance and academic outcomes. The *PlayWorks* coach at BAA recognized the negative elements like gangs in the neighborhood, who hovered visibly right outside of BRICK Avon’s playground gate, and the pressures placed on young students by these negative forces in out-of-school hours that counter-balance the intensive work and desired outcomes of the staff at the school.

3 Year Perspective and Reflections by BAA “Stakeholders”

Each person who was interviewed was asked, how they would describe each year of the BRICK Avon implementation as it’s been unfolded, and share any “lessons learned.”

The principal spoke about the very beginnings of the BRICK proposal to Newark Public Schools:

We are still NPS teachers ... and when Dominique came to us and said do you want to be a part of the solution, and I said “yes!!” And we all said “yes!! Let’s be a part of the solution!!” It cannot be associated with any one person, because if it is associated with only one person, then when that person is gone the thing dies. In a meeting he (Dr. Janey) said, “How is BRICK going to not become just a little boutique?” And I never really understood that And I remember that that was brilliant that he said that... because it caused us to think how is this not going to become a boutique ... how can we keep it living ... and so then when a new administration came in, they were able to see that it is working.
(Principal and founder)

A staff member spoke about how those who are at BRICK Avon this third year are there by choice:

Right, so if you felt that BRICK wasn’t for you, right, you made the transition to move on to another school, but now we have a group that’s based, like, I haven’t heard anyone say, you know, “this is not for me, I don’t want to be here, I’m not into the BRICK model.” So I think everyone basically knows what they are expected to do as far as the time, we are here until 4:15, we know what’s expected, we are following, So I think this year everyone is on board.
(Support staff)

A staff member recalls the stigma that used to hang over the school before BRICK:

I definitely feel that before BRICK, the BRICK program, BRICK (laughs) staff came in, that Avon just felt like it was under such a dark cloud. Like we had this cloud hovering above us. And no one was getting along. The third floor felt like the penthouse, they were separated from the second floor, the second floor was separated from the first floor. And, it’s like, everyone was doing their own thing. Everyone had an attitude, they weren’t working together, and when BRICK came in it was definitely, like you said, it definitely was a turnaround. You were here because you wanted to be, because you wanted to teach. I’m not saying that we had to get along as brothers and sisters, but we had to respect each other. You had

to respect the program and you definitely had to buy into it and be on board 100%.

I love, it's like I go home, and I can't wait to get back some days the next day to be with certain staff members because I feel like we are doing a fantastic job, we want to save the world, sometimes we can't save them all, but I feel like we are doing an excellent job. ... And I guess our staff is dedicated, devoted. Mr. Perpich, Ms. Haygood, Mr. Lee ... they are just fantastic administrators, not to leave out Ms. Weidman, but (laughs). I really see their vision, and we are working toward it and now we just need the community and parents to buy into the vision and just assist us and help us as much as possible because this is a community and it takes a village. (Support staff)

3 Year Reflections: Relationship w/Newark BOE

The principal recalled the first year and the many people at the district office who helped the BRICK Avon leaders:

Human Resources ... I praise God, there is a lady, S M and she was in HR and there were things that we just had to get through to make sure with teacher contracts, or even with in the second year, when people had to choose, "oh I don't want to be there," or "OH I can't be there I have children or I'm coaching at a HS, I can't do that" ... S M was the one who helped us, even in the midst of chaotic , she was kind So people were kind!! It is so important, and it's not just dropped off. (Principal)

A teacher spoke about the unfairness of taking away the contract for the extra hours of teaching at BAA:

Because of our SIG grant As it is though, teachers are not given the respect and value that they deserve, they're just not. So I've been teaching for seven years, and I make \$53,000. That's my salary. Seven years. But the SIG money, because we are staying an extra hour a day ... so we were all getting \$12,000 more ... no matter how many years you have been teaching. That's a significant amount. So, SIG, I guess you've heard about that for next year (it will be reduced to a \$3,000 stipend.) And then, the money is still going to be here at our school in our budget, so it's just like a slap in the face. So sometimes, I feel like it weakens us, and it prevents us from really doing things that are really good for our students and really good for retaining the quality teachers....high quality teachers I don't think that teachers are valued the way they need to be. ... So I think that as a nation, it's important that we place a little more emphasis on our teachers and treat them as professionals if we really want to raise our scores and have our kids match up to other countries Just look at other countries, teachers are so respected I think that a big part of it is you want these things that happen well

you need to raise the bar and make sure that we're getting the right people that have the right mindset, not just people who think "oh I get to come in at 8 and leave at 3." (Teacher Gr1)

3 Year Reflections, Interview Excerpts Continued

Several individuals comment about student outcomes looking back over each of the 3 years. The principal reflects about how she felt:

Well I feel like each year we are getting smarter... I want my kids to get smarter, and I feel like, me, I'm getting smarter each year. The first year, I was just treading water... glob, glob, glob.

And to be fair, the first year as principal, is overwhelming.

So I feel like the first year, I was just like, "C'mon' guys, please don't quit," like Ali, and Chris, and Wideman and Princess ... Ali was supposed to be in the position that she is in now, but we couldn't work it out so she was actually a classroom teacher... and she was like That first year was humility and hanging in there... . The second year opened up more ... let's start proving ... let's start seeing what we can do.

Some folks decided that they really did not want to be here and that was helpful And then this year, I missed the entire first five months of this year, and praise God that I have the most amazing team ... some people say things and don't really mean it but when I say it I really mean it, because without the team there is no way we could get through And they put systems in place, and this year is being more intentional about what we are doing.

And next year, we are on the right road ... I know some teachers are probably worried, thinking that we are still trying to cut people, but we are not ... from my heart I can say that as long as they want to be here, I want them here, so now instead of pruning and cutting it's about cultivating what's here.
(Principal and founder)

A parent chose to comment about student behavior and discipline:

One thing I think has changed dramatically is the discipline structure. I'm a strict disciplinarian. You have to go the way I told you to go. Some of our students are coddled way too much. ... But the thing is ... there is just no way I'm taking my son out of here. That would be silly! With all I've put into place to try and get him to where he needs to be ... to transfer him out? I know he is not going to get that anywhere else. (Parent)

A staff member commented about the many new resources, new systems to support students, and the engagement of the faculty:

Well, it's definitely changes (from) before it became BRICK you know, in terms of tutoring, resources, Smartboards, etc. Just the resources in the classrooms, the workshops, the meetings, the staff, I don't believe that before it became BRICK that the departments were meeting, or the grade levels were meeting.

They probably met, but not as often. From when they first became BRICK, (there were) more increase in grade level meetings, to discuss what's going on, I see more of that. From once it became BRICK and over the last three years, even more meetings.

And, Mr. P has I&RS meetings with parents are coming in, and discuss the progress of their child, with the child's recommendation, that's new this year, we didn't do that last year. So that's new. They meet with him, the teacher, maybe the child study team, the attendance counselor, meet with him and with the parent. And sometimes it may just be him. Yes, different for different students. That's something I don't think he did last year, that is something that I've noticed took place this year that did not take place last year.

More grade level meetings, and departmental meetings. And the math coaches and the reading coach, more active, more visible, I see them more aggressive in their job performance, I see them much busier now than they were last year and in years before. Not to say that they did not do their jobs, but they seem more diligent. We also have Ms. D who was in the classroom last year, this year she is working with the math and with the reading. I'm sure there are some other things but it's just my thinking right now.

In terms of resources, Smartboards, new computers, more computers in the classrooms, and I'm told that the K babies now have laptops in the classrooms! Yeah, they now have laptops in their classrooms, they didn't have that last year, didn't have that before they became BRICK. Just a lot of equipment also. From chairs (laughs) you know just a lot of small things that make a difference. You know, chairs, just to make it comfortable for students to sit in the classroom. More equipment, chairs in the classroom

The afterschool programs, like Ms. D. has hers. I see more teachers staying late tutoring. I had a little girl yesterday at 5pm. I said why are you here? She belonged with Ms. O. in tutoring. She didn't want to go. So I took her upstairs, and there was Ms. O. with five boys. I said, "Ari, it's not about being all boys, it's about you getting help. If dad thinks you are here getting tutoring, and you are just sitting here outside the main office. She didn't like it. Like I said, I'm the mean one ... but I took her up there ... So you see teachers that are doing before and after school tutoring. You have a lot of teachers that are doing before and

after school tutoring, you see a lot more of that. You see an increase in that.
(Security staff)

A parent commented about the changes in the school:

You can see the change. You can see the change in the hallways, you can see the change in the teachers, which ultimately shows in the student performance. Is it a change in the right direction? Absolutely! Absolutely! Because, If you don't look at the AYP. I mean Avon Ave was not that bad of the school. But when you start putting the test scores out there for people to read now we have a problem. Anytime you have a school that can almost singlehandedly reduce the prison to classroom ratio, 75% of our kids are reading on grade level ... when they get there! And guess who is part of that 75%? My kids! That's pretty significant in a short time! That's deep! (Parent)

A staff member commented about changes to the neighborhood over the past 3 years:

I think in terms of crime, it's up a little more. We had a kid, it was a staff development day, and he was sitting out on the steps with his mother's iPad, in front of the building. And mom was just standing off to the side, just talking to another staff member. And a kid rode down the street on a bike, and you see him entering the gate on the security camera. Snatched the iPad out of the kid's hand, jumped on the bike and rode away. And we didn't have things like that take place.

One thing that did cut down, they used to fight a lot after school, before it became BRICK Avon. Avon fought a lot after school. At BRICK we don't have that as much, we have more staff visible outside the school. Ms Haygood just has a really great rapport with most of the students and she is out there. And they will just stand out there and talk with her. If she sees something, she is so spunky, you know, it's nothing for her to walk right up to them and say, "no, no, no, no, no ... and get right up to them, and talk with them. And or she'll say "we have to make better choices" ... this situation ... and sometimes we'll get this one who just standing. ... That's a big difference!! We don't have those fights ... Avon fought!! Whew!!! Lordy!! Traffic!! Kids Running out in the street, traffic It's a big difference between Avon and BRICK Avon. We had two kids to get hit by a car. They were fighting up the street. They just ran out and got hit. Another car was coming, two kids got hit, two kids hit, just sitting on the sidewalk, this was about 5 years ago, or something like that but oh, God, they used to fight!! Oh, They used to fight out there!!! Thank God those days have slowed down!
(Security staff)

A staff member commented about looking ahead:

Well ... I would like to see Avon to continue to go forward. I know that it may not be possible, but I would also like to see something in place to address some of the behavior issues, because I believe the kids can do so much better. What

with the behavior issues, I think it hinders the progress we can do ... (*potential?*) exactly! I would like to see a lot of the staff that we have here, I would like to continue to see the majority stay here for let's say ten years, because I feel like there are really a lot of dedicated teachers and staff members here, and not just teachers, but support staff too. We have a pretty good administrative team. I would like to support that, and give each other [support]. (Security staff)

Brief Summary and Analysis

As individuals from the BRICK community reflected upon changes over three years at BAA, there are several common themes. First, changes in staffing after year one and two. It seems that was a “push–pull” process. Some teachers and staff members may have not been invited back to BAA, especially after the first year. Some may have chosen to move to another school, especially after the school day was formally extended after Year 2. Thus by Year 3, there was a feeling that a team was being built and developed, those up for the “fight.” Secondly, many individuals mention the infusion of technology and systems as making a difference for teaching and effectiveness helping students. Finally, several individuals expressed the belief that with these changes, BAA was “out from under a dark cloud” and moving in the right direction with everyone’s efforts.

Student Outcomes Over Time and Lessons Learned

Looking at student outcomes over time, the director and founder of BRICK stated:

So I think for me, some of our greatest student outcomes is in our STEP results data. So in our first grade class, 70% were on a 0 step coming into first grade, pretty much on K or even pre K level. 12% entered on level. In our second year, we had 30% of our rising K kids enter 1st grade on grade level. Up from 12% the first year. This year, 50% of the kids entered 1st grade on grade level. What’s most important, out of the 50%, those not on grade level the majority of kids were not ours. They were not from our K. The majority of kids ... close to 100% of the rising K students were close to grade level at beginning of Grade 1.

That's another important thing about this school, We value preK–3. That's our foundation, our bedrock. That's where most of our resources go. That's where I pretty much spend most of our money. If we reach those kids, we've given the kids the resources and skills to move on to the next level.

I think that that would be the greatest success for me. It would be that our K–3 program has evolved and continues to evolve. So I'm excited to see the data at the end of this year. So now you will have a core of kids that have been here for 3 years entering into the third grade—or even from 1st to 4th—and are they on a trajectory to be on grade level at the end of third grade. That's exciting.

Then there's also the NJASK ... Grades 3 and 4 math we doubled the scores, sometimes tripled. ELA in Grades 3 and 4 we doubled the scores.
So NJASK and STEP would be the two big successes. (Founder/director)

Brief Summary and Analysis

The founder and director echoes the sentiments of those quoted above with specific reference to student outcomes that reflect the positive change in direction that BAA is taking over three years.

Time as a Resource and a Strategy

An extra hour was added to the formal school day at BRICK Avon after the first year. Those interviewed were asked how time been structured at BRICK Avon to support key activities such as teaching and learning, teacher collaboration, leadership and governance structure? These excerpts share both positive and negative perspectives about the extra time that was added to the traditional school day. The principal emphasizes the importance of time:

And it's not just to add more time just to add it but to make it more meaningful. So instead of a 60 minute period you have a 90 minute period to teach what you need to do. With more time comes time to plan. We have to give teachers more time to plan what they are doing ... horizontally and vertically. (Principal)

A teacher talks about meetings with teachers prior to the formal lengthening of the school day:

How has time been adjusted? They held meetings before they extended the school day, they held meetings and they asked our opinion what we wanted to see from 3:05 to 4:15. So they involved the teachers a lot and they held meetings, and if you wanted to attend attend ... and give your input ... It was hands down, we need the academics, because we are already struggling. (Middle school teacher)

Teachers give more detail about how the added time is used. One teacher said:

So here we have two double period days where we meet with our [grade level] teachers, with our master teacher/coach and just kind of discuss best practices and what's going on in our classrooms. Sometimes, we share PD, and that structure really helps us to be on the same page and lets us share with each other. ... I think something that we were successful in last year was using time to grade our interims (assessments) together and go through that data analysis together. So we'd use our preps to be shifted around or whatever so we could all meet and engage in that process together. ... I think next year our double periods are going to be used more strategically so we can do more data analysis together during those double periods. (Teacher Gr1)

Another teacher shared:

It's the only way that we were able to do the 90 minutes of guided reading. Last year we only had 45 minutes. So seeing each group every day this year is just so powerful. ... After seeing every group every day at this point in my career, I'm not letting that go! ... The power of that is phenomenal! (Teacher Gr1)

Other teachers reflect about the longer day:

The first comment is from a middle school teacher who described a rocky start for the students but gave the longer day a "thumbs up":

You know at first the kids were really resistant to it, but now they say OK, they are used to it. *And do you find it supportive?* Absolutely, because you have the extra time! Because there is still not enough time in the day.. I think I would also like to see at some point down the road some program after school for the kids, you know I think they need that as well, especially in this community. (I know there are some clubs) There are some little clubs, but my kids because they are bussed and they don't get to partake in it. ... Years ago they used to have what they called a sweeper bus that would come back and pick up kids if necessary. But time wise it doesn't feel like the day is any longer, to be quite honest with you. Now when I get out at 3 o'clock when we have staff development days, and I get out and I say, wow what am I going to do with all this time? I'm not used to this anymore. (Middle school teacher)

Another middle school teacher stated that the longer day gave more time for science, a real plus:

I think I like the BAA model. ... I wasn't real keen on the extended learning time (laughs) when I came here, you know in terms of staying here a little longer. But I like the way the extended learning time gives us enough time to schedule classes that are in equal increments regardless of ... the subject. At one time, it used to be math and language would get the blocked schedule, they would take blocks, and science would get the short end of the stick. (Laughs). And it was difficult when you would have a class a block one day and then um a half of a block the next day. Especially because we try to incorporate a lot of hands on activities in science, and its difficult when you have short time frames. You know you're running behind schedule, and you try to clean up one class while you prepare for the next class. I like that science gets an equal block, everyone gets their fair share. I also like that we... in science we attempted to write our own curriculum this year, instead of following the curriculum the district has. ... The district tells you which module to teach, and sometimes with the rotation of those modules, the students forget what they learned last year. And so we got a chance to modify that curriculum to more fairly address the needs of the students.

(Middle school teacher)

One of the instructional leaders at BAA speaks about engaging teachers in the decision about how to use time at BAA:

We have the extended school day ... so we go from 8:20–4:15. So some schools decided to like tack on another hour at the end and have it be different activities, things like that. We just decided to have it embedded in the school day, 'cause we didn't want to have another thing to run, and we decided that teachers needed more time in the formal school day for small group instruction.

So having that extra time has allowed for teachers time. Teachers get two 90 minute periods planning time per week. One that's more directed by administrators or coaches, around data, planning, or PD, things like that. The second one is more driven by the teachers and the team and the grade level leader., and in some of them they will ask the coach to come in, but in some of them they will be more lesson planning or grading or something like that. So that has provided more time during the school day, because teachers (become) exhausted, and not exactly going home thinking about reading their math to be ready for the next lesson. So we wanted to build in as much of that time into the school day.

So one of the big things when we first came in was that we didn't want to exhaust teachers. ... We didn't want the same model as the high performing models like KIPP or North Star, um where teachers are there to 8 o'clock at night, and take work home, and this and that. Realizing the challenge of being a teacher, we wanted to build as much time as possible for planning into the day realistically, and still provide quality time. Because the more time you prep for planning the less instructional time is provided to students. So, there's a balance.

The instructional leader evaluates the outcome of adding more time:

Yeah, I think that the teachers have used their planning time as a team relatively effectively. I think we have become more strategic about what PD is, so if we know that in a week or two they are going to be starting a unit on geometry, you know the coaches and I will work together to make sure that that PD session is on geometry, that this is what your outcome unit is, these are some activities. Let's talk about what geometry means to the Common Core, so that we are developing teachers [with a] deeper understanding for what the upcoming unit is.
(Founder/vice principal K-5)

A teacher reflected about the use of time at BAA and how it affects everyone:

Two ways. There is never enough time. I feel like I need more time. But after awhile ... I don't know what the rule is, but kids their brains shut down after awhile. I literally stand there and teach them for three hours, but then they are not going to learn. I get obsessive. But then I say "STOP" to myself, because they are not hearing you, be quiet, they are not hearing you!

But, on the other token, the 4:15 is a killer. I think that I have changed physically myself in this last year. I am exhausted, I just ... I don't see my family. I mean it's my job, it's not my life. But I made it my life. It's a LONG day. I mean that hour is just difficult, very difficult ... for everybody.

The interviewer asked if it would be difficult to lose that extra time and the teacher referred to the unwelcomed change in the contract for the following year (AY 2013-14).

No but if it ... Well since they took my money away, they might as well change it back! That's a big issue!

[However, the extra time to meet with our colleagues ...] That's very valuable. We don't do that... Well, we do it more often this year than last year.
(Teacher Gr3)

The middle school teacher/math coach spoke about how there is still never enough time:

Even with the extended day, grade level and departmental meetings. This year is the first year ... Last year we met as departmental meetings but last year we only had 45 minutes. We said that was really not enough. So the administrative team worked last year to put that 90 minute block in place for this year. It is very helpful. The teachers themselves have said that it has made a world of difference this year to have that 90 minutes. That was definitely from teacher input.
(Middle school math coach)

A first grade teacher shared her perspective on the longer day, cautioning about burnout:

With extended day, it can be tough sometimes ... I think burnout is something that we need to look into in coming years ... making certain that the teachers aren't feeling overwhelmed. It's all about time, there's not enough time in the day to do everything you need to do. So we need to be very strategic about everything we do, and we need to make sure that teachers aren't so overwhelmed and drained and totally feeling like they are doing everything I can and my kids are not moving ... or only making a little bit of progress. (Teacher Gr1)

A middle school teacher comments agreed with her colleague about the positive and the challenges associated with a longer formal school day:

I would say that time here is our biggest issue. I mean that in terms of teachers and sustainability. I think that the extended school day, I thought, "oh that's great," I taught in the afterschool, I stayed late. I don't know what it is, but the formalized longer day ... I was so tired last year, and I'm so tired this year. I was with the kids afterschool, but it's just different. It's different. BRICK did do a really good job in terms of the scheduling. I don't feel like it's more of the same, but it's better time.... the subjects are allocated, the students have a specialty everyday. It's what a normal school day should be, but I had not seen that in Newark before. I have more planning time here than before, but I just, I don't know, it just disappears, I don't know where it goes. I cannot get anything done in school. We now have 90 minute blocks. I don't have a family, but if I did I don't know how I would do it. My life is a little bit too much my job.

Yes, I am on the fence [about the longer day]. Like sometimes I need to go to the post office or go to the doctor, and I cannot do it. Unless I take a full day off. We cannot just run out on our lunch hours. (Middle school teacher)

Brief Summary and Analysis

The first two summers and the first year, BRICK founders partnered with BELL to provide afterschool extended day academic support (afterschool hours) for students through the Supplemental Education Services (NCLB) and through private funding raised by BRICK (as described in the Chapter 5). By the second year, and with the support of the three-year federal School Improvement Grant (SIG), BRICK Avon Academy extended the hours in its formal academic day and increased the formal hours of the

school and BAA teachers in the school from 8:20am–4:15 pm (adding an extra 90 minutes per day). After the formal day ended at 4:15, students could participate in special interest clubs until 6pm. The extended hours of the formal school day allowed teachers to have longer teaching blocks (90 minutes) for literacy, math, and science; gave time for additional planning meetings for teachers; as well as allowed teachers to offer creative activities and clubs that reinforced academic goals and allowed students choice. For the afterschool club activities, teachers proposed (and often taught) activities such as sports, dance, guitar, chorus, yoga and quilting, along with more traditional activities such as football, basketball, etc. With funds budgeted from the SIG grant to augment salaries, teachers were required to put in over 200 extra hours of formal academic school–time, including the longer formal (extended) day and the 2–3 week summer institute.

For the most part, teachers’ interviews reflected an appreciation for the extra time in the formal school day that was added. Most teachers mentioned and favored the 90 minute teaching blocks for all subjects—not solely reading and math—that the longer day facilitated. Teachers also appreciated the extra time for planning and working together to focus on student assessment data and needs, and the additional time for professional development. Several teachers mentioned that the longer days could be exhausting for both adults and students. Overall, teachers and administrators indicated that the additional time in the formal school day was a valuable modification in the implementation of the BRICK model at BAA.

One should also recognize that those teachers who did not wish to participate in the longer school day had transferred to other schools (or opted for retirement) before the longer school day was implemented. Thus, those who stayed for the longer day had

chosen to be a part of that change, and were therefore more inclined to look for the benefits of that change. It is notable that in their responses many of the teachers say “we” about the longer day, showing their ownership of the longer day and its implementation as a part of the BRICK model. In earlier interview responses to the BRICK model, a number of respondents including teachers say “they” about the model. In this response about extending the time in the school day, most say “we.” Some of the teachers, even the younger ones, are “still on the fence” about the benefits of the longer day vs. the energy and time it requires of them, even with the additional salary stipend.

Budget

The interview excerpts in this section were mostly from the interviews with the founder and director, the principal, and the BRICK fund development officer about how the budget for this work was designed and implemented. They were asked about what were the budgetary challenges short-term and long-term for sustaining this model and its desired outcomes for students. He was also asked to describe and analyze district support, short-term public and private grants; other support; challenges and opportunities.

The principal shared her perspective about the school budget, especially since all principals had just been asked by the district to cut \$400,000 from their budget for the coming year.

So you were at the meeting when they were writing this down ... technology was the loudest thing that everyone was talking about. Because we have a great leader, he had the foresight to insure that we got the technology while we had the SIG money. Hail the Smart Board So you prioritize, and that's life ... (it) happens. But hopefully, when NPS sees what is working [they] will support it.

I heard one parent said that her son never wants to miss school because of Ms. J (art teacher), because he loves her, he idolizes her So if you have to cut those things! ... So we have \$400,000 we have to cut, and even some of those names you have mentioned are on the chopping block. I know I can't put my head in the

sand and cry about it. You know what somebody said to me yesterday ... if they think the corporate model is so great for education, why don't they use the corporate model to get everyone to give input about ideas about what to do, not just at the school level, but at the district level ... that's hard to do, but that is sometimes how corporate does come up with innovative solutions ... so it doesn't all rest on one or a few people. (Principal)

The principal also spoke about possibly sharing staff members between schools:

Principals had told me some ideas about that, and I thought OK that's interesting maybe we can share (some staff members) ... I had four positions that I had to cut, and there was at least one position that maybe could be shared, and I didn't think of that but another principal shared that idea. (Principal)

A teacher responded to her perception about the relationship between the Newark

Public Schools district and BRICK:

Well, Cami Anderson supports us, from what I see. She's been here, she is also, from my understanding Teach For America, which also the six BRICK founders are also Teach For America. So they have that kind of a relationship, you know, they have the same goals, mission ... Um, so in that aspect, I think we are getting a lot of support. There were rumors that she was leaving, I hope she's not. But ... I think because she is there as superintendent, I think that's helping BRICK. That's my (take) personally, I think we have a lot of leeway here. You know especially with the SIG grant and the curriculum. You know, when I talk to other teachers within the district they're like, "you're not using Connected Math, you are not using this?" ... "how did you change that?" And when you go to meetings downtown and you hear the person who is head of curriculum say "you have to use this", and you're sitting there going "we're not using that at BRICK, what are you talking about?" ... (I) just keep my mouth shut. Because what we are doing seems to be working! So It's interesting how we seem to do a lot of different things. (Middle school teacher)

The director of fund development for BRICK was asked about the SIG grant and what were the challenges for sustaining BRICK Avon's funding after the SIG grant was over.

SIG, (it's) a huge influx for start up and turnaround. Well the good thing about SIG, and this is Dominique's expertise and him really thinking out of the box. Dominique really used SIG money to overhaul the school. Like with the technology, the purchasing of the books. So, he was really strategic. So, the money we have in hand. So he has really broken down those systems, so now we have a new system. So now we can maintain.

But the heavy lift for us was year one and year two. But even our fundraising model, we all say that the heavy lifting year is year one. Because it's technology and supplementing the curriculum.

So we can say to that model, yes, of course SIG is supporting some salaries now. But, I think he will be able to move around some of those salaries.

But what I call the brick the mortar we do upfront in the first year. When we go to our funders, our message ... and this is when Dominique came to MCJ, he said, after three, we are really close to sustaining ourselves on public funds. ... Because we have higher expectations, we will always need money. But minimum compared to what we have with the SIG.
(Professional administrative support)

The founder and executive director of BRICK responded to the question about the SIG grant and sustaining the work after the grant is over.

So we are at the current time that we have purchased all the materials and trinkets that we need. What we now need is the organizational capacity. Those are things that we would not like to enter the fundraising field to do because you basically have to fundraise for a position every single year ... and that's not very healthy. So now the question becomes do we do fundraising to add additional support such as PD, but we won't be raising money to pay for positions. But we won't be raising money to pay for positions. OK.

So there are two big questions that we have to answer as SIG starts to go away. One was the extended (longer) day, which was answered by the contract. So now we have to pay each teacher \$3,000 according to the new contract. That's an easily sustainable cost by the district. Right now we are paying approximately \$12,000–\$15,000 per teacher, so that was the largest question that was already answered by the new contract that was passed and ratified by the teachers. The second question which has not been answered is that we have three positions that are crucial to our building now and that are on SIG's payroll. So now we have to figure out, how do we keep those positions? And that's something we are still trying to figure out [and to do it within the system]. Yes, that's definite.

Yes, I don't want BRICK to be in the position that every year we have to raise this amount for these positions. If it comes from the district that's different, but otherwise for us, it's unsustainable. And especially if we expand, you are talking about a lot of cash every year that we have to fundraise. (Founder/director)

The founder and director of BRICK reflects upon the potential financial benefits of being a charter school, and some of the challenges that BRICK would face if they transition BRICK Avon into a charter school. He is a proponent of this largely because of the more favorable budget for the school (in his assessment).

My friends in charter schools they got their per pupil @ \$14,500–\$15,000. They have their budget, their staff, their ... Sibling preference. So 70% of your K class are from parents that can afford this. So it would be fine if they said OK you can become charter, but every single student must re-apply, and there is no sibling preference; or, you can have no sibling preference for the K class. So, it's a private school with public funds. It would be fine if they said OK everyone 1–8 stays the same but K class is all lottery, no sibling preference, that would be fine, I have no problem with that.

He talked about the added challenges with the budget due to student transiency:

So right now we have 580 children on roll here, we were only budgeted for 533. It's the same thing at Peshine. We have 600 and we were only budgeted for 560 or something like that. So no, the money does not follow the child. It should, maybe similar in NY ... there are periods and times when they shuffle the money around. You didn't get the targeted amount of kids, we'll take the money back. I think the district will most likely look at that ... Yeah, but the problem is that if I get the money in January, I cannot staff a position for the year. So it's not talking about that it will change the nature of the building. It's about trying to get the numbers right in the beginning so that gives us the proper staffing.

The founder/director spoke more about budgeting at BRICK Avon and how, like most organizations, the biggest budget costs are in staffing and “human capital.”

Yes, so no matter what, materials should be no more than 2–3% of your annual budget, at max 5%. The largest portion of the budget is human capital, the future does not hold any ... there are no bright lights as to what this might look like in public education. It's effective human capital. Human capital is what keeps me up at night. We need these bodies to support these kids.

And the ironic thing is that Newark Public Schools has had the money to do this, but now we are like an empty tin can. We have no evidence to show that it works. Before we took over this building they had two master teachers, and four coaches to work with the kids, they had all these staff members and not one result to show for it. That's sad right?

And now, we actually being very strategic working with kids for getting results, and we need those positions, but we have no evidence. So, of course the state will not give you more money, why would they? I would not give you more money. You didn't improve anything when you had the money, tons of it! ... It's a hard argument when the economy is contracted. It would be different if we were in the Clinton era. Now everyone is penny pinching. So, that is the tough thing that really scares me. You need effective human bodies to touch the lives of these kids. (Founder/director)

Interview Excerpts re: Budget and Politics

Two other individuals, a professional staff and a teacher/founder also expressed opinions about how the school budget and politics influence one another.

Now when it comes time for budget cuts, no one has time for anything except the bottom line, and it's not just a district thing it's a state thing ... and as long as you are always doing more for less and have more ... it doesn't work, it's not logical. But that's where we seem to be going, and I guess that's in education But I think for the most part, in the state, like in NJ, your urban districts are just small areas with concentrations of people, people in other parts of the state say it's just a waste of money. (Professional support staff)

From the beginning, I've expressed this in our initial planning meetings.. that there is an underlying issue that we have yet to address. And that's the social issues in this community. I grew up in this community, I grew up on Chadwick. And the underlying (issue) you know poverty that, that impacts what goes on here and so ... um, what has been told to me is that "yes, it's recognized as a problem ... but we can't take on that problem. It's too much. That's where we need to get out to community leaders and we need to get to politicians, because when is it going to stop? Because who is going to take on these issues? Hopefully, the school will have a positive influence on the community ... but it's hard to just say there is not relationship...

Because the issues of like the moving ... is the issue of the parents finding what works best for them ... I can't afford anymore, whatever, I have to move out. So we don't get to the heart of why is that happening ... or, it's just not safe so I moved. Or, I got evicted, so I'm moving; or, I'm homeless, so I moved. How do we address those issues?

And I'm very passionate about that, because I was that kid. I was that kid. Trying to replicate what were those things, those factors in my life where I was able to succeed despite all that ... how do we recreate that for our kids where they can still succeed regardless of their circumstances. (K Teacher/founder)

Brief Comments, Summary and Analysis

Budget and Politics

With funds budgeted from the SIG grant, teachers were required to put in over 200 extra hours of formal academic school–time, including the longer (extended) day and the 2–3 week summer institute. To address the issue of salaries for the extra “extended hours” of the formal academic day, the BRICK Avon leaders and NPS agreed to use the SIG grant to pay every teacher at BRICK Avon a flat \$12,000–\$15,000 per year (\$50/hour for the extra formal time) for the extra time, for the three years of the federal SIG grant. (The amount increased by a small percentage each of the three years.) Additionally, those teachers who stayed after 4:30 to offer clubs or tutoring or coaching sports after 4:30 pm in the afterschool program would receive equivalent of an additional \$3000 “coach stipend” for a year–round activity. However, most teachers—even the youngest teachers—were so exhausted by the formally extended hours and then the additional hours of grading and preparation (from interviews and surveys), that the afterschool activities (4:30–6:00) were led mostly by key community partners (yoga; dance; and music, etc.) once the formal academic day was extended to 4:15 p.m.

By the Spring of 2013, in the midst of a myriad of activities along with the normal schedule and the pressures of state testing (March–May), anxieties over budget and other District pressures were evident, especially in private meetings with/amongst the BRICK administrators. According to Lee, the traditional NPS neighborhood schools received approximately \$7500 per student for their budget (from a NJ state per pupil rate to Newark of approximately \$20,000/student). Because of this, the BRICK leaders were looking ahead to years beyond the 3–year SIG grant to determine how they could sustain the necessary components of “what was working” in the SIG grant to support student

success at BRICK Avon Academy. How could “what was working” at BRICK Avon be sustained beyond the large federal School Improvement Grant? Dominique Lee was exploring and pursuing alternatives to increase ongoing funding. These alternatives included applying to the NJ DOE for BRICK Avon to become a charter school (still a neighborhood, non–lottery school and still with unionized teachers); or, other developing options such as the Urban Hope Schools (non–unionized public schools). According to Lee, charter schools in Newark were receiving approximately \$14,000 per student; and the Urban Hope Schools would receive close to \$18,000 per student from public funding. In addition to these possibilities and plans, BRICK Avon (along with other schools) was told that it had to cut an additional \$300,000 from their 2013–14 budget within a few weeks. As these pressures were shared with key faculty, their anxiety rose as well. For example, one of the professional support staff was a long–term veteran of NPS, who with graduate degrees and longevity had a salary close to \$100,000. It was evident that to cut \$400,000 from the budget, some bigger budget items needed to be identified and cut to achieve the demand. And, like many principals and schools in an era of school budget cuts, much of the decision came down to which faculty positions to cut; and, often positions held by more senior staff. To cut a position, even if renaming it to keep the function but hire in a younger, more affordable staff person, was a common strategy for school leaders across the country, and not only in Newark or just at BRICK. (And this is what happened at BRICK Avon, that position was cut to meet this budget challenge, and that staff person was transferred to another school in the district.) Furthermore, as Dominique shared possibilities of alternate funding mechanisms such as charter or other types of schools, faculty became concerned about their pensions—especially those

faculty who were closer to retirement. In 2013, Lee and the BAA leadership team actually submitted a proposal to the State to transform BAA into a charter school, primarily for budgetary reasons. BRICK applied to convert BRICK Avon Academy from a traditional school to a charter school beginning in AY2013–14. The application was a finalist at the State level, but then was blocked by Superintendent Anderson and a charter was not granted. The reasoning behind this initial application for conversion of BAA to a charter school—according to founder and director Lee—was predominately financial, especially with the ending of the SIG grant in 2014–15. Lee believed that the more than \$6,000 additional per pupil amount annually that BAA would receive if they were a charter school would allow them to continue to fund many of the strategies and supports that were being used and beginning to show positive outcomes at BAA (including the three staff positions supported by the SIG grant).

Overall, Charity and Dominique did not talk extensively about these issues with faculty. They were not trying to hide anything, but rather to protect teachers from any further stress at the most stressful time of year when testing and assessing student academic outcomes were already stressful and top priorities. They kept teachers informed, but focused more upon the daily operations of the school.

In mid–April, Principal Haygood went to defend her (cut) budget for the following school year, prior to a school faculty meeting. What she learned at that meeting was a bombshell. She was counseled by the District NOT to share this bombshell news with the faculty. However, believing and living by truth and transparency in her partnership with her learning community teachers and staff at BAA, Haygood decided to share the information with the teachers as soon as possible. She shared the information

with the faculty immediately, back at the school faculty meeting the same day. As the BRICK Avon community approached the end of Year 3 and launching of Year 4, this bombshell was a disrupter and a source of great emotional distress to the entire BRICK professional community.

This was the story of the “bombshell.” A new Newark Teachers Union (NTU) contract had been negotiated and accepted in March (2013). This was a milestone event, partly because there had not been a new contract for teachers for over 3 years and there were major changes and reforms implemented regarding teacher evaluations linked to annual pay awards and/or increases. As a part of those new guidelines, there were guidelines for supplemental pay for teachers in what were called “Renew Schools.” Basically, these were schools that were in an “improvement” or “turnaround” status. Up until this point, BRICK Avon had been in an autonomous space, not included under “Renew Schools” (not called a “Renew School”). What Ms. Haygood was informed at her principal’s meeting was that beginning next year, BAA was a “Renew School” and as such would not be permitted to pay their teachers for their formal extended day as they had expected to do with funds from their SIG grant. To this date, BAA teachers were receiving a flat \$50.00/hour (about \$12,500/year) for the extra 200 plus hours they worked (one hour per day, plus 90 hours for the Summer Institute). The teachers all knew that this arrangement would have to be renegotiated after the end of the SIG grant, but they had the understanding (and to them the “promise”) that they had accepted these terms for more hours and more pay until the end of the grant (in 2014). Some teachers had given up extra after-school jobs and/or made extra financial commitments based on this arrangement and understanding. Additionally, teachers at BAA were, for the most

part, just hitting their stride in their leadership and collaboration at BAA as a Professional Learning Community. As the survey and the interviews reflect, they were (for the most part) happy to be a part of the BAA faculty and learning community.

The new teachers' contract and the new guidelines for *Renew Schools* stated that teachers would be paid \$3,000 per year at the END of the year for their extra hours worked. The teachers at BAA knew this when they voted, but they did not consider BAA a Renew School. They were at BAA and had what they understood was that BAA teachers were under a separate agreement tied to the SIG grant and funds. Superintendent Anderson said that with SIG grant and funds or not, teachers at BAA would be held to the same agreement as a "Renew School" and thus would be paid for extra hours in that same way. This meant that working the extra hours, teacher at BAA (and other Renew Schools) would be making less than \$10/hour for the extra hours they worked. Teachers could not believe that this could be true. They felt that that their salary agreement for a longer school day had been made based upon the available SIG funding. They were devastated, and so was their principal. There was also pressure from the central office to get the teachers to sign their contract commitments for the following year (AY 2013–14) before telling them about this change in salary of over \$10,000 per teacher. The new Newark Teachers Union contract also specified that the \$3,000 for extra hours (after 3pm and for summer institute) would not be paid until the end of the year. This meant that teachers at BAA who signed a contract to be at BAA for the following year would work over 200 additional mandatory hours and only receive \$3,000 for all those hours at the end of the next school year, not paid during the year as they worked the hours.

Principal Haygood could not get involved formally in the teachers' meetings and negotiations to try to change this, however, she encouraged them to make an effort to meet with the Union to try to change this decision. The teachers, who had been looking forward to returning to BAA, were now in a quandary. It was very late in the year for any of them to try to look for other positions to transfer to another school within the district. They organized and met with the Union over the next six weeks to try to hold the district to what they as teachers felt had been promised to them when they signed on to the extra hours funded through the SIG grant. And, the funds were in place, so that was not a barrier to keeping "the promise" they had been made. In meetings with the Union, Union representatives reported that they had never had a situation like this before, where a whole group of teachers were so passionate and fighting to remain at their school because of their dedication to the school. The teachers were not successful at changing the superintendent's decision. There were so many tears and so much anxiety about what each teacher would decide to do. Teachers were torn between their dedication to BAA and their principal and community on one hand, and the issue of equitable pay and funds that were available to pay them what had been "promised" on the other hand. One very creative and dedicated teacher-leader told the researcher that he had made a most difficult decision and decided to leave BAA for next year because he reflected that IF he stayed and got inequitable pay, he would inevitably become bitter. Knowing himself, he could not live with being bitter, and he could see no way around becoming bitter if he stayed. He made the decision very sadly to leave. Other teachers had similar decisions. In the end, many teachers stayed at BAA, but it was a very unhappy ending to what

should have been a year to celebrate. The situation also was less than helpful at supporting the learning community that was coming into being at BAA.

Final Question: How Would You Like to See the BRICK Avon Academy Story Told and Who Might Benefit from Hearing It?

Introduction

Those interviewed were asked about how each of them would like to see the story of BRICK Avon told. The principal said:

I want parents who feel disenfranchised from the whole learning community feeling like I was in a failing school, my child's in a failing school, we're always going to be in a failing school ... I want the disenfranchised parents to know that your children... are the geniuses that God intended them to be. It's the parents, I need the parents ... I think that there have been some 90/90/90 studies ... it's not about being a success story ... because of course it can happen.

That's why Dominique started researching 90/90/90 schools about 5 years ago before we even started talking about a BRICK ... and so it's not that it can't happen, because of course it can because research shows that it can... but that it will, here in Newark, in the most difficult area in our city, that it can happen!

That mindset that you are talking about ... that I'm in a failing place and my child is in a failing place ... to change that is a transformation To transform that mindset, to see my child graduate from high school, or graduate from college... to join a trade ... that's huge.

I think maybe they haven't found success there yet, but I think that what happens sometimes with the 90/90/90's ... sometimes, those schools are charters ... So who do I want to hear? I want public schools to hear That it's not just charter schools ... and in any city there is an area where people say, well that area is better and it can happen there ... that it's not impossible ... that it is possible.

No, no no no ... this is where I've been for my whole 17 years ... and I want people to say that the South ward has always been the dumping ground ... and even if it wasn't intentional dumping But even if we throw all these resources, it's not with any sense But no, we can say but the way you threw all this money with no plan you intended us to fail!

The lady who was principal who was here before me (more ...) She was set up and folks did not give her a good chance. So yeah, I want public schools to hear that this can happen and that this can happen in your worst part of your city ... but yeah, right here, in the South ward ... it can happen. (Principal/founder)

I think it would be interesting to tell the story from the different perspectives, like what you are doing. You know, what does it look like from the view of let's say a student who has been here and is now a sixth grade student. And the same for staff, for teachers who have been here before and after ... hopefully, but we are not there yet, but getting to the same endpoint. (Vice principal K-5/founder)

I'd like it to be told from the stance of I started this by being one teacher in one classroom in a failing school. No matter where you are, you can effect change in society. NO matter where you are, You can definitely change society. If you have the heart, the passion, the ambition, to change another person's life, you should go for it. And that our children deserve better. And that is so important. I kind of get angry when people say, you should go back to local control. I say, tell me, what does that mean? Why do you want local control? Do you want children to succeed? Do you want power? What is the plan? If you want local control—why? It goes back to the school board. Have you seen the makeup of the Newark Advisory Board. These are kids that voted down the diversity of high schools ... that's what you want? Local control? You want local control to get rid of a superintendent who is actually trying to make things right? ... I'm not saying she is perfect or that everything she does is right. I would not say that. I probably agree with 95% of what she does. What does local control mean to you? It rarely, rarely means anything about children!

If it's a high performing school that wants to expand, why not? Why say no? Why would you say no to TEAM. I'm not saying that they don't put kids out, or that they are perfect, but they outperform us. Why would you say no to that? That's another 500 slots that we can give to needy children. BRICK was about changing the status quo of the children. It wasn't about power, it wasn't about money. And that's huge. And working as a team of individuals who make it happen. When we say we want local control, why? To tell you the truth, I don't think either local control or state control will change the trajectory needle of children. You had local control and the needle didn't change; you have state control and the needle didn't change. Obviously neither of these matter, there must be something else. So we want things to change for children, we can make it happen no matter what system of control you have. So I think that's why people say, "If you have the will, they have way, and I have my faith, keep your eye on the prize, we can make it happen for children." Let's not sit back and complain anymore (we get caught up in battles) Battles! It's all about power ... and then we use children to explain that ... I'm so angry about it. I do not like using children like that ... It's a lot of tears and a lot of sacrifices ... I don't agree all the time with Cory Booker ... But he makes logical sense sometimes ... it's just mind boggling, you hear those kids and they are screaming ... and I don't like that because you are using kids as cogs for the advancement of your own power grab. Now, are kids better or worse off after state control? I think maybe a bit better, but it's hard to say. It's just fascinating to me.

How would I like it to be told? PAUSE . . . To me, it's almost about, like YES, it could be, anybody could have formed BRICK, but I think part of what makes BRICK Avon Academy and now makes BRICK Peshine are the people who are involved. So I'm not saying just the 6 founders . . . but more just like who the people are. Like there is something to be said for all of the teachers on the third floor or the second floor or the first floor. They were not necessarily a part of the BRICK founding team, some of them only started just this year.

So that's what I mean by like hearing it from the people. I almost feel that if you took , as you are doing now, with each interview with everybody in this school, and take the perspective of each person, they're all going to be linked anyway. They're all going to talk about this whole student, they're all going to talk about this individualization, they're going to talk about the culture, and this team-building. So all these things as they're discussed, just through the voice of one of them. It's just different experiences and different stories, but it's all the same in many ways. So I want to hear from the people. (Vice principal 6-8)

How would I like it to be told? Um, I want it to be honest. PAUSE . . . and just to show whether that's a video or pictures, our thinking, how we made mistakes, what we learned from those mistakes, our successes, our challenges. I want people to see the passion that we have for what we do . . . and that's why we continue to do the work that we do. That's why we are all still here. We haven't given up on that mission. Um, to see our perseverance and our drive.

And to see we really have a love for the city of Newark, for the South Ward, for the community, we have a love for our kids. I would want the world to see that. You know, because I think that there is so much negative um information, and um images of Newark, and that always grieved me, even growing up. Whether in HS or college, just the impressions people have of Newark, but they don't know the history of this city. Newark has blood in a lot of things. So if they don't hear of positive change that is happening, a Newark school, and in the Newark schools, that's sustained. That's what I want people to hear. And, it's a public school. It's a public school. I love my charter friends (chuckles) I love my charter friends and my private school friends, but I'm really a product of public education and I believe that we can change public education, you know? And so, if we can be that hope that there are very good things happening here to spark something in other areas and other people here, that's what I would want!! (K Teacher /founder)

Yeah, I think it would be great if we could do a documentary, or what you are doing . . . get ourselves on the news . . . what we're doing is worthwhile. We are teaching kids, and I don't think anybody understands that. You do, because you've been here, I do because I'm here everyday . . . but the outside world

doesn't understand. You can't go to college if you haven't graduated from high school? (Teacher Gr1)

I think it could be told in anyway. I think I'm always surprised anytime I see like something that's been either emailed out to our funders ... you see it in kind of a romantic way. Oh my gosh, you feel good about what you are doing. I went to a TFA summit, and Dominique and Charity were featured, and the video, you can look it up, it's so great. And I was like, that's what I want to do, it's so great, that is what I'm doing. It kind of draws you back, and let's you see the bigger picture. We are here everyday on the front line, with the mud on our boots. It makes you feel good about what you are doing. I think about my old school and I am so happy to be here at BAA vs. there.

I think it's good for everyone to hear the BRICK story. Those who support me to see the positive picture. I think it's especially hard for people understand what it's like in Newark, and where you actually started from. I have some friends who are teachers who complain and commiserate, and I just bite my lip because you don't want to be rude, but they don't have any idea of our world. I think it would be helpful to show what we are doing. Small group instruction, blended learning, SmartBoards, having music, gym, Spanish ... no that's NOT happening other places. So it's important to let others know what's being done for those outside, but NOT look at what we are doing for them ... NO, we are doing it altogether, it's a community effort.

I love just having conversations with people. Everyone always wants to hear what's going on at school. It's hard to know where to begin.

You don't want to exploit your kids or talk about how violence is so bad in the neighborhood. You want to keep it kind of light. But facts, or the picture sent to funders, those are great to show what we are doing here. I guess that is open-ended. (Middle school math teacher)

How would I like it to be told? I would like it to be one of those happy endings where they say, student achievement is great, and the school is actually turned around. Because for a long time Avon was just seen as the failing, bottom of the line school in the district. We had the worst scores, or if they weren't the worst scores they were the next to the worst schools. I remember one time we had an administrator from NPS and virtually told us off as a staff ... you know, about this is where you stand, all of the schools are here, and here is Avon...and you know, were just very hard on the teachers, as if we really weren't doing the best we could with what we had to work with. I'm not saying that we couldn't have done better, but there might have been better ways to (tell us and to support us). So I'm hoping that the story with BRICK will be that we turned student achievement around! (Middle school teacher)

I think that it is everybody, everyone who is involved in the success of our students, including our students and their families, and BRICK is building responsible, intelligent, and creative kids. And it takes a village to do that. All the teachers, all the grade levels, and we all all buy in ... and I've seen it where we have certain teachers who are not here ... I'm not doing that, I'm now doing that ... And I said, "hey, this is your job!!" ... And that is my own philosophy. If I'm here, I'm going to work!! You know, And I tell my supervisors you know, listen I'm not going to be the person that says why we have to do that; if you give me a plan and tell me what is the plan and what you want me to do, I'll be happy to do that, that's my job! And I've seen a lot more where teachers are like that... some teachers say I'm not going to do that ... But sometimes you just have to change with the times! You know? (Middle school teacher)

I think any area like the one we are in, would benefit from it I think that teachers, most teachers would benefit from knowing that whatever they are doing is not new and maybe they need to work a little harder. And I think that whatever we are doing here, it should be out of the bag ... the cat should be out of the bag. Because if it is, it can be helpful. Not that I can be (bragging) ... that's the wrong word. You know, I still need that extra time ... I need to be able to look back two or three years from now to see growth ... Because I don't feel that what we are seeing now is a true ... I want to see the real. (Teacher Gr3)

The interviewer asked, "It's not sustainable yet?"

Yes, thank you! It hasn't been here that long ... sustainable and I want to be able to say WOW seven years have passed, the kids are all advanced proficient. Like in my neighborhood where I live, all of the kids must be advanced proficient or the teacher will lose her job, that's the difference in where it stands. I want to see them in advanced proficient and then I'll be able to say, you know it took almost ten years but look, you can do that in ten years! (Teacher Gr3)

Newark Public Schools. I think that our story must be told that it works, that they treat people like they have value. I believe any district, Passaic, Paterson ... I believe any district that deals with the issues that we deal with, needs to understand that we take this home. It is job, it is not for the weak-hearted, it is NOT for the weak hearted. So we need as much support as you can give us! That means support in PD, support in you just being in your building, and NOT just to write you up and to see what you did wrong.

To say, "How can I assist?" NOT "You are doing this wrong." I feel that we need to tell the BRICK story and the success in this building. To everybody who is dealing (with this kind of situation)—even if it is in Baltimore, even if its in

Chicago... these kids CAN excel, these kids can learn, we are not taking the cream of the crop!

We are not alienating kids who are on the lower lexile levels, who are 2, 4, 6 years below reading level, we are not afraid to jump in there and roll up our sleeves, and challenge that child. Just support us. That's the only message I have, just support us as BRICK supports us. I don't mind that here is a lot harder. I don't mind that lesson plans take hours. I don't mind doing extra, I don't mind any of it. 'Cause I know that it is making a difference, I know it without a shadow of a doubt. You know our principal is great, our VP's great, if you put that humanistic element back into it you would not have such issues with the teachers. (Middle school teacher)

Yeah I would hope that whoever tells the story does not paint over the trouble spots. Simple, don't. Tell the story, that Mr. U who made a program that got thrown out the window. That's important for all those other people out there who are trying to do the same thing, and meet that same challenge. But tell the successes too. Yeah. Do that Um but you got to have those.. examples, you got to ... Yeah, so tell the story, you got to own it, own the story, don't painting over the not so bright spots. You have to watch a YouTube video, it's called "to wear sunscreen." It's the graduation speech from Chicago ... it's really (powerful).

It's a video, I think if you watch it, I think that's how the BRICK story should be told. OK, thank you , thank you very much. (Teacher Gr5)

I definitely feel, to me, I'm a community person at heart , right? And I just feel the community needs that bright beacon. And I think we all need to feel good about where our children are going to school, we need to feel good about where we live and where we spend most of our time. And, unfortunately Newark has a stigma, the South Ward has a stigma. And people need to know that they are making the best decisions, and I think that most parents really want what's best for their children, for our families. We make decisions to better our children and our families. If this is the best that you can do right now, you need to feel good about that choice. I don't think you want to feel like, "gosh that's not really the best school but I can't afford something better right now' ... I want them to say, "You know what, they are doing an awesome job there." I know our house might not be the best, but I know that when they go to school, they are getting an excellent education. I think that makes parents feel really good, the community feel really good that they have an excellent school. So I want the message to go to the community first and foremost. We all need something to be proud of.

And then I want the message to go to our supporters. We need to replicate (this) in more schools. And we need them to know we are doing a good job in spite of everything. Why this is a good investment. And to me, I think it starts there. Of

course we would love to grow into a Harlem Children's Zone and grow into a national (model) ... Absolutely. But that's the end goal. The more support and resources, the more we can do for our community. I always like moving with transparency and integrity. And if you don't involve and move with your community then what success are you having? Because I truly believe you will educate these young people, because I truly believe that everyone can learn.

We learn in different ways. But I truly believe that with the right environment, these children can go on and do whatever they want with hard work and dedication. But what happens when they become successful as deemed by society, because the way that I define success might be different from other people. But if you want to define success by what you are earning ... If we don't change this neighborhood, we will educate children and they will move away. And they won't come back. Because until we fix the neighborhoods and the community, all the money will keep leaving Newark. Because you hear that all the time. "When I grow up, I can't wait to leave." Or, "I'm not coming back." If you don't have a middle class in the city, you can't build the city. To me, you have to get the community buy-in. Because they are going to demand change, they are going to want better, and their kids may want to come back to live. IF they choose to, and if not they can choose other places but at least Newark would be an option. . But right now, Newark is not an option. . Right now, if you are successful, it's not an option. And I think schools help that message that, "get your education so you can get out." Instead of "get your education and come back and help transform your community." That's why I think BRICK is so critical.

We will sound the alarm 'til they tell us to shut up, right? (laughs). Hopefully, everyone will sound the alarm and there will be small changes School is the hub of the community ... I always say schools and churches, they are the hub of our community. (Professional administrative staff)

It would actually be nice if the BRICK story could be told by a student a student who was here in the lower grades when BRICK actually took over. How it was then, and how it was now. I'm thinking if you have someone who was in the fifth grade when they initially came, and now that person is in the eighth grade, and how has BRICK changed your thinking about education.

Even as teachers, it's difficult for us to give the children the credit, because it is all about them ... and they ultimately determine whether we are good teachers or not. I think a lot of times, we question ourselves, and we question our colleagues, but how often do you get a teacher to ask a kid to evaluate or say how they think they did as an educator. Usually that happens, when? When the children are grown and we see them and they say ... oh I remember when I was in your class and how much you helped me. (Middle school coach)

I don't know, you know I'm curious to know what's going to happen down the road. You know there have been a lot of changes.

But what are the long term (outcomes) ... you know? And I think my feeling is, once the students that have started here in K are in 6th or 7th grade, you will see the results (*It takes time*), it does. And I think then you will see. Because you have these 7th and 8th graders that are (kind of set in their ways). So if you start with the young ones. (Professional support staff)

I would like for it to be told ... not necessarily from the underdog perspective because the school has always had a high amount of talent. There is just this a stigma because of the neighborhood and because of the history ... but since the turnaround, the story is really a highlight of what is already present, or has there always been present. The amount of talent ... the amount of intellectual capacity that has always been here, highlight that—that it's always been here, that it's now even bigger and better because it's always been here.

Versus (here's) a school and look what it is now, because look what we did ... We already had (talent and capacity), we did a few changes and now we are more than awesome ... and the ones that would really benefit are the children and the parents, because they may have their own stigma and their own (negative self-perception) ... And I think that the parents and the children seeing how they viewed themselves coming here ... When they say that they go to Avon or that they are on Avon Ave. or even that they are from Newark, they get (respect).

So that for their own self-perception they ... can be proud that they are about to go places. It would help with that kind of story. (PlayWorks coach)

How would I like it to be told? I can tell you, Dorothy, that before the people in prayer, I asked that we receive the administration that would really care for our children and move mountains, and do whatever it takes to do right by our children. I think BRICK did that. I think they are doing that. I think any school that gets teachers to come in and teach because there is too much more to it. They are not just a teacher. These students receive so much more from us ... they are not going to recognize. And the thing that always stays in the back of my head is that in order to do that, you have to a lot of the stuff that goes on, it's the parents ... until we find a solution to the problem Until I take it upon myself to say, I'm going to stay an extra half hour to work with this child, until I do that, there is no ... the child is still out there on his own. (Security staff)

If success is apparent, then it should be a model, and it should be extended. I don't like the train and where it is going. Because it took a lot to get here... whoever you are and whatever position. You have worked hard and you deserve

to be allowed to work, with benefits, and decide when to retire ... Because people work very hard and very long hours, so to be discarded like garbage ... that's wrong. I just don't understand why someone would do that (cut out people on the team) but so boldly, and so (coldly) But they want to follow the corporate type environment, then call in all your staff and ask for ideas about how to make improvement, and cut waste. (Support staff)

You know there is this HipHop song that came out last summer, called Buster Robbins Chris Brown Lil Wayand. It's called "Look at me Now." They should look at that. There are a lot of people who are out there and who are still out there today who talk about (what) our inabilities are and what we can't do. Who we really are and what we are connected to. Just like they said on the opening credits of *The Real World*, "You think you know us, but you have no idea." You have no idea. You have no idea some of the struggles our teachers have personally gone through. You have absolutely no idea the struggles our children go through on a daily basis and still come in here and succeed educationally.

So those people who consistently run their mouths in such a fashion that is not helpful or who run their mouths in such a fashion it does not provide us with higher STEP schools. That's what we need to hear about. Because when you have kids like T and C who were absolute terrors in September but are two of the best behaved students right now ... those are the stories that those people who run their mouths about what happens in our building need to hear about, those are the moments that they need to be here for.

Those are the things they need to see before they go before the School Advisory Board or before they stand before a TV camera, or a community meeting and call out our executive director's name ... The Tomfoolery, they are miserable people! (Parent)

EVERYONE. Everyone should hear it. I was so proud of them when I saw them on TV last week, the K class, they looked so professional and so well mannered, let everybody know! IF it works, pass it ON! The legacy is that Avon is a good school, they need a little work, but it's a good school! (Teacher/substitute)

Brief Summary and Analysis

The responses to this final question reflect various characteristics and hopes of the BAA learning community in Year 3. First, those interviewed express the hope that the beginning of change in positive student outcomes will grow and be sustained over time. Second, there is a hope that the long term changes at the school will be reflected in the

larger neighborhood. It is an expressed hope that the neighborhood will begin to change to become safer and more healthy, and that students will return after college graduation to help with this process. Third, there is a pride and a desire to share the good news of the transformation in progress with other schools in Newark, New Jersey, and beyond. There is a desire to share hope about what can happen differently for students when people work hard and work together with a plan. There is also a strong desire to tell the story that this school and this neighborhood have ALWAYS had young people and adults with talent, determination, and strong dreams. If (and as) the school “turns around,” the people have not changed, they have always been talented and strong. Hopefully, the changes will bring new pride for those people in themselves, for their talents and worth and potential. Finally, there is a desire to tell the whole truth, not just the good parts, and to share the struggle and hard work and the mistakes and failures along with the success that daily life in public education entails. There is a desire to tell the BAA story in and through the voices of its students and community.

Chapter 14

Update: Subsequent Changes at BRICK and BRICK Avon Academy (2015–2020)

Introduction

There were a number of notable developments relating to BRICK Avon Academy and BRICK in the period of time between the end of this present study (Spring 2014) and the time of the study's publication (2020). Some of these notable events and developments related to the present study are included for information in this update.

Enrollment Changes at BAA

Despite the changes to the enrollment system influenced by NPS Superintendent Anderson's Universal Enrollment *One Newark* Plan fully implemented in AY 2014–15, it appears that the demographics of the school remain about the same, with some small changes over three years in certain areas. The program committee of the Newark Advisory Board, chaired by Leah Owens, did a descriptive study of school demographics using official NPS school enrollment data based upon student residency by zip code for before and after the implementation of the One Newark Plan. Table 14.1 is based on data from Owen's study. It shows some variation in the student population before and after AY 2014–15, at least as it relates to students enrolled who reside in the 07108 zip code area.

As shown in Table 14.1, there is some variation in the number of students enrolled at BAA for the 2014–15 year onwards. In 2016–17 and 2017–18 (NJ State Report card), BAA showed 525 students enrolled (down from 600 in 2013–14; and from 575 in 2014–15). The decrease in enrollment numbers would signal a probable correlated decrease in the school's budget. The percentage of students attending from the neighborhood, as determined by student home zip code, also varied by over 18%—from

87.4% (AY 2013–14) before One Newark universal enrollment to 69.7% (AY 2016–17) after One Newark. Eighteen percent is a fairly large differential. The decreased enrollment of only 525 at the school by the last year also signals a budget decrease. More investigation would be needed to explore the variances by grade in these changes in enrollment and the impact it might have on Avon Avenue School overall.

Table 14.1

Percent of Students Who Reside in the Neighborhood Where the School is Located, PK3–8, 2011–16

School	Zip code	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17
BRICK Avon	07108	80.4%	86.0%	87.4%%	78.1%	69.8%	69.7%
School pop by NPS		572	563	600	511	572	542
School pop by NJ state report card				600	575		525

Note. Source: “NPS Class Size and Composition Audit Report FINAL REPORT JUNE 2017” by Leah Owens, chair; Reginald Bledsoe, vice chair; Dashay Carter, Marques–Aquil Lewis, Newark Board of Education, Program and Instruction Committee, p. 50. <https://www.nps.k12.nj.us/mdocs-posts/nps-class-size-and-composition-audit-final-report-2017/>.

The NJ DOE School Report Card shows some other demographic trends. Over three years, there was a trend for slight growth each year in the number of Hispanic

students (5% in 2010; to 5.7% in 2013–14; to 7.2% in 2014–15; to 10.2% in 2016–17), and a slight decline in African American enrollment (95% in 2010; 94% in 2013–14; 92% in 2014–15 to 89.9 % in 2016–17). There was also a steady increase in the percentage of students at BAA with disabilities, up from 14% in 2011–12 (82 of 572); 10% (59 of 600) in 2014; to 20% in 2016–17. (Note that as total school population decreased, if sub-populations such as students with disabilities stayed the same, then the percentage of the sub-population to the total would increase.) There were 3.4 % homeless students and 1.9% students in foster care in 2016–17. There was a small but steady decrease in the reported poverty rate (free school lunches) down to 81% in 2016–17 from 84.5% (507 of 600); and from 93.9% (537 of 572) in 2011–2012. (This rate is always dependent on the success of the school to get parents to complete and file lunch forms.) The chronic absenteeism rate for the school for 2016–17 is listed as 23% (compared to a 9% rate statewide). However, this rate is improved (decreased) from 29% in 2012–13 (2014–15—ref. *Early Lessons from Newark's Charter Schools* p, 8; by Public Impact, 2015—commissioned by Zuckerberg, Start-UP. From presentations by NPS).

What all this indicates is that the current Avon Avenue School may be serving less students who may have come from a wider geographic area of the city (vs. the immediate neighborhood). The students ethnic profile became more diverse (5% increase in Hispanic students, and a similar decrease in African American students; a slight decrease in family income (indicated by lunch forms); and a higher percentage of students with special needs (although this may be mostly a function of the lower overall enrollment). The lower number of students enrolled overall would also signal a lower school budget, as determined by the district on a cost per pupil basis. The notable

decrease in chronic absenteeism (over 10% decrease) could be correlated in part to the increase in family income (per lunch forms), as well as to the school's successful focus on this problem in order to change it. It seems that the school was successful in decreasing the rate of chronic absenteeism, which might relate to an increase in student academic growth achievement outcomes.

Growth in BRICK Schools and Leadership Teams and Growth of BRICK Organization

BRICK Peshine/Dayton (2012–13)

In the third year of the implementation of BRICK Avon Academy (2012–13) and a year after new Superintendent Cami Anderson arrived in Newark, BRICK launched it's second BRICK Academy school at another South Ward school: Peshine Avenue/Dayton St.. The new school was actually a merger between Peshine Avenue School, and the children and families from Dayton St. School, which was being shuttered by the district. It was a challenging merger of two traditional public schools because of the geography: approximately 2 miles apart, divided by one of the largest public parks in Newark, Weequahic Park. The principal of BRICK Peshine, Ms. Barnes, worked tirelessly with both faculties and parents from both schools to make the launch of the new BRICK Peshine Ave School as welcoming and seamless as possible for children and families joining the school from Dayton St. School. Faculty members actually rode the bus transporting children from Dayton to Peshine both ways every day for the first few months of school, to insure the safety and wellbeing of the children and to allay their parents' fears of having their children travelling so far from their neighborhood.

BRICK was able to combine some of the staff development and build bridges between faculties and resources of both BRICK Avon and BRICK Peshine Academies.

Still, the leaders of BRICK gave flexibility and support to both principals and faculties to develop their own school plans and to address the specific needs of each school separately. Promoting leadership from within the teaching faculty at BAA was a part of the BRICK Strategic Plan that seems to be realized, at least in part.

South Ward Children's Alliance

By the year 2013, the BRICK organization was sharing their vision and goals in their five-year strategic plan to include a neighborhood-based component of BRICK to serve the social, emotional, physical, health, education and housing needs of BRICK Avon and BRICK Peshine Academies, as well as all the schools in Newark's South Ward. Despite the fact that many of Newark's political leaders (mayors, Congressional representatives, Council persons, etc.) came from the South Ward, there were almost no neighborhood-based social service organizations specifically serving the South Ward. Additionally, the South Ward had become one of the poorest areas in the city, and the ward where all of its neighborhood public schools were failing schools.

BRICK founders and BRICK Academies saw the gaping needs on a daily basis for services and resources for the children and families in their schools. They were anxious and intentional about creating an arm of BRICK that could support the work of educators in schools by providing the missing social, health, education and economic services for South Ward families. They knew this support would help to improve conditions for families overall, and would support the increased academic achievement of children in the South Ward. BRICK laid the groundwork for this next effort with research much as they had for the first BRICK Academy. They looked at models such as Geoffrey Canada's work in Harlem with the Harlem Children's Zone, and eventually

hired someone with experience and knowledge of this model to be the director of the South Ward Children's Alliance (SWCA). BRICK formerly launched this organization in 2015–16.

The South Ward Children's Alliance (SWCA) is a collaboration of traditional and public charter schools, city agencies, nonprofit organizations, and neighborhood residents who are developing a comprehensive approach to ensure academic and life success for children living in the South Ward of Newark, NJ. SWCA is doing this by building a cradle-to-college-to-career pipeline of supports for children and their families. <http://swcalliance.org/site/needs-and-segmentation-analysis/>

A needs segmentation and needs analysis for the South Ward was commissioned by BRICK and the SWCA and prepared by the Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Public Schools at New York University (<http://swcalliance.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Needs-and-Segmentation-Analysis-Final-9.13.16-Smaller-File-1.pdf>). This was done to lay the foundation for seeking funding support, and leading to a successful grant submission and award to SWCA and BRICK from the federal Promise Neighborhood Grant in the fall of 2018.

Federal Promise Neighborhood Grant: Upper Clinton Hill

The \$30 million Promise Neighborhood Grant was awarded to the South Ward Children's Alliance (SWCA) and the BRICK Education Network (BEN) in the fall of 2018. The grant targets the Upper Clinton Hill neighborhood (maps in Figures 5.1 and 5.2). The grant will allow the alliance and its partners to offer greater services in several key areas, including housing, health and early childhood. In an interview in February, 2019, founder Dominique Lee stated:

What truly separates us from other organizations is that we genuinely believe that in order to serve our children, you have to be able to partner with other organizations and create an ecosystem for children to be successful. We accomplish this by having a robust pipeline of partnerships to support our families

and children around housing, health, and economic mobility services. This is not to say we're accomplishing this all by ourselves or that we're taking our focus away from academics. This means that we're not blind to the situations around us and that we're being proactive in seeking partnerships and creating systems in place to best support our families and our children. We're a CMO that focuses on neighborhood transformation, and not just school transformation, specifically in terms of transforming ourselves in the school. We focus on becoming good stewards and partners in the communities we serve, and we continue to use an institution, like a school, as a beacon of hope for a community that has historically been underinvested, redlined, and everything under the sun (The 74 Million News, February 11, 2019: <https://www.the74million.org/article/how-one-education-leaders-newark-nonprofit-became-one-of-the-few-minority-led-groups-to-win-a-30-million-federal-grant-to-fight-poverty/>).

BRICK was successful in their 2013–2018 goals to launch a neighborhood-based entity with partnerships to address the needs of children and families to support education and well-being. The BRICK organization was pursuing its vision to transform the neighborhood surrounding the school(s).

With these major developments and the creation of a South Ward community agency to serve children and families, BRICK began to realize its goals (Strategic Plan) to create a more robust system of social support in the community for the schools and for the children and families the schools served. During this period of launching the SWCA, BRICK received guidance and assistance from at least two major models for broader school reform: the Harlem Children's Zone and the Full Service Community School (Children's Aid Society, NYC). Again, BRICK seemed to be creating another hybrid model for the SWCA, building and launching a local social service non-profit in the South Ward community to serve the families and children of BAA and other South Ward schools.

BRICK and Charter Schools

BRICK founders had applied before to the New Jersey Department of Education to create a BRICK charter school in Newark. As reported in Chapter 9, BRICK applied to convert BRICK Avon Academy from a traditional school to a charter school in 2013–14. Their application was a state finalist, but was blocked by Superintendent Anderson and a charter was not granted to BRICK. The reasoning behind this initial application for conversion of BAA to a charter school, according to founder and CEO Lee was predominately financial, especially with the ending of the SIG grant in 2014–15. Of \$20,000 per Newark student sent from NJ DOE, Lee had said that he only received about \$7,500 per pupil per academic year from the NPS district for the BAA school funding/budget. He said that charter schools received almost twice that amount per pupil, funding which went directly to the school (none for administrative services and overhead). What is less clear is how to calculate the amount for facilities (building, utilities, maintenance, custodial) and services (legal, human resources, special services, administrative support) that traditional district schools like BRICK Avon Academy receive from the district—costs that charter schools have to cover out of the public and private monies they receive.

BRICK Achieve Community Charter School (AY 2016–17 inaugural year)

BRICK applied to the State to form its own independent charter, and was granted the charter for BRICK Achieve Community Charter School. The school opened its doors for kindergarten in AY 2016–17, adding a grade level each year. In AY 2018–19, BRICK Achieve moved into its current home in the former Clinton Avenue School (NPS) in the South Ward on Clinton Ave. The school is all on one level adjacent to a Newark neighborhood park (Mildred Helms Park), and formerly served as a district early

childhood school. Like BRICK Avon and Peshine Academies, this school is within the Upper Clinton Hill neighborhood served by the Promise Neighborhood grant. The federal grant gives BRICK and the broader community the opportunity to build and strengthen local community systems of support for children and families who are challenged by economic inequity. The creation of the BRICK Achieve Community Charter School, headed by BRICK Educational Director C. Perpich (former VP at BAA), gives BRICK the opportunity to employ the BRICK model more as they had originally intended it to be implemented. That is to say, this new BRICK charter school was started with Grades K and 1, and adding a grade each year. This might make an interesting new study to compare and contrast the BRICK charter school's development and outcomes with the BAA story in this present study. The differences would be shaped by the inherent differences between charter and traditional public schools, but the comparison and contrast using the BRICK model could be informative.

BRICK Avon Academy and Peshine Academy Student Outcomes End of Present Study to AY 2017–18

In AY 2014–15, New Jersey students began taking the new PARCC standardized exam, which replaced the NJ ASK. Because of this major change in standardized assessment, it is difficult to track increases or decreases in student achievement scores comparing years prior to the change to years after the change. However, it is still possible to make comparisons between schools and like districts from the commencement of the PARCC exam. Student growth is also a measurement reported by the State Department of Education in NJ that can be used to assess a school's performance. In AY 2017–18, both BRICK Avon Academy and BRICK Peshine Academy saw dramatic median student growth academic progress (student growth compared to other schools).

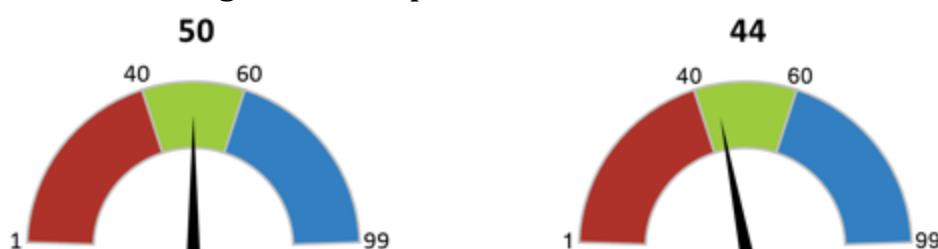
Figure 14.1

BRICK Avon Academy AY 2017–18 School–wide Median Student Growth Percentile and Percentage Met or Exceeded Standards on PARCC

BRICK Avon Academy

Median Student Growth Percentile

How does student growth compare to other students?



ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Below Standard: 1 – 39.5

Met Standard: 40 – 59.5

Exceeds Standard: 60 – 99

(Overall School results)

MATH

Below Standard: 1 – 39.5

Met Standard: 40 – 59.5

Exceeds Standard: 60 – 99

% Students that Met or Exceeded Standards on State Tests at BRICK Avon Academy

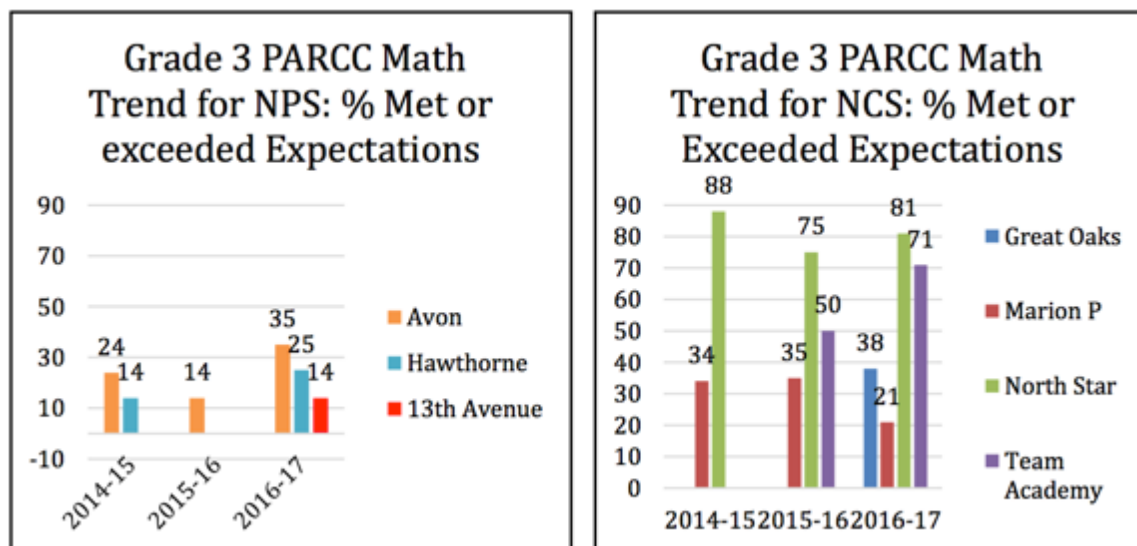
English Language Arts: 25.5% Math: 18.1% (Overall School results)

Note. Sources: NJ DOE School Report Card; and Sadovnik et al., 2017–18.

So, although BRICK Avon students (and BRICK students in general) still did not meet state standards for proficiency in ELA and math on the PARCC statewide standardized test, students did show strong growth in these areas, compared with students in other schools with similar demographics across NJ.

Figure 14.2

Grade 3 PARCC Math Trends Among Newark District Schools and Newark Charter Schools AY 2014–15 to 2016–17

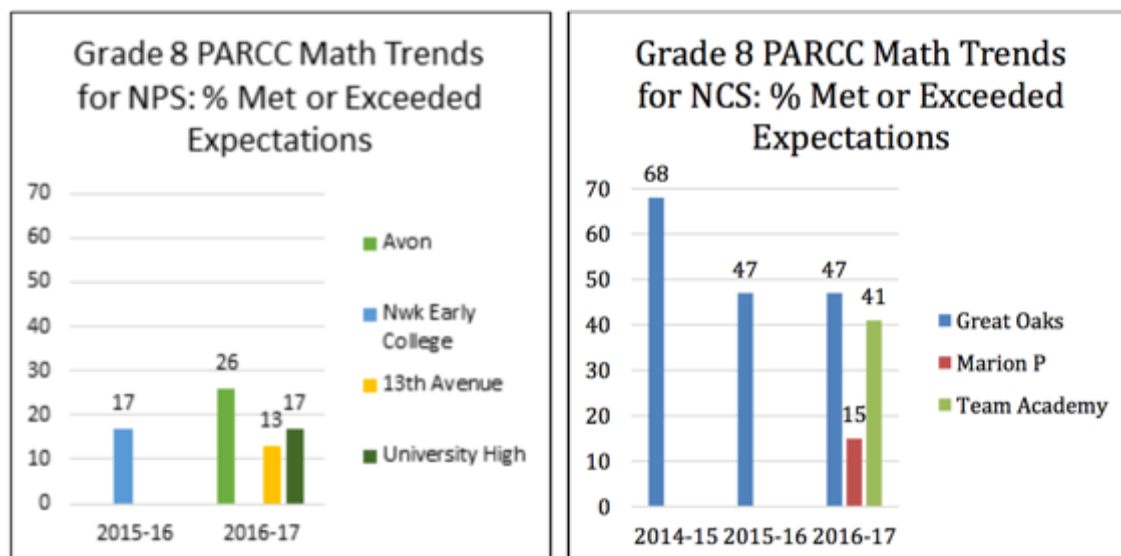


Note. Source: Sadovnik et al., 2017-18.

Comparing the Grade 3 Mathematics PARCC scores across NPS and NCS across both neighborhoods, there is a significant performance difference between charter and public schools. In 2016–17, only Hawthorne Avenue School & Avon Avenue School outperformed Marion P Thomas Charter School. Among the NP, Avon Avenue school has improved in Grade 3 PARCC Math scores by 11% (from 24% to 35%) from 2014–15 until 2016–17. For NCS, Team Academy has improved by 42% from 2015–16 to 2016–17.

Figure 14.3

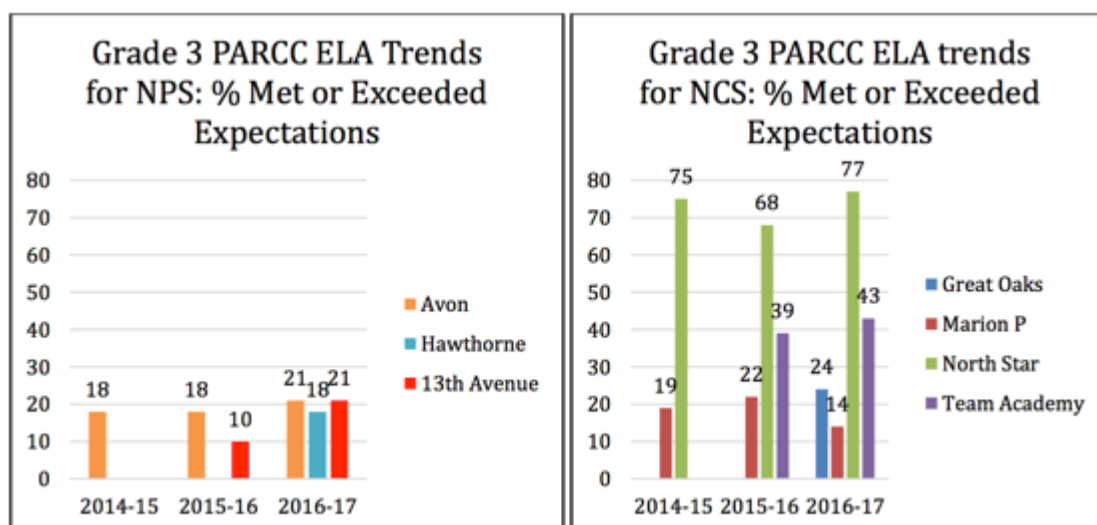
Grade 8 PARCC Math Trends Among Newark District Schools and Newark Charter Schools AY 2014–15 to 2016–17



Note. Source: Sadovnik et al., 2017-18.

Figure 14.4

Grade 3 PARCC ELA Trends Among Newark District Schools and Newark Charter Schools AY 2014–15 to 2016–17



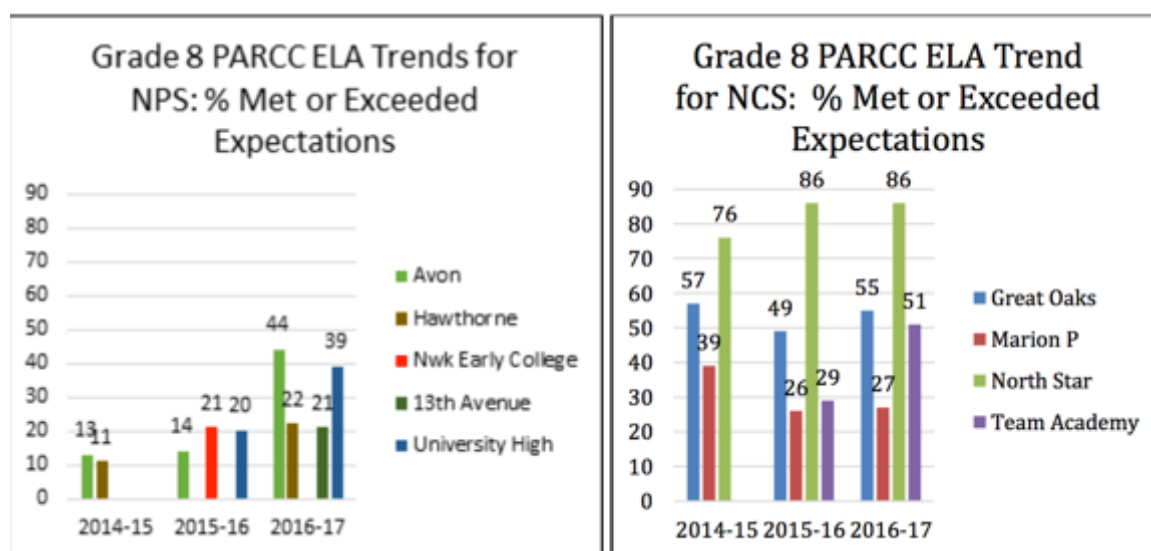
Note. Source: Sadovnik et al., 2017-18.

Despite the focus on K–3 reading skills through the STEP assessment program, BRICK Avon Academy’s ELA student scores meeting or exceeding proficiency seem consistently low. (We do not know from this data how many came *close* to meeting proficiency.)

Grade 3 PARCC ELA scores show a similar trend between Newark District Schools and Newark Charter Schools. Comparing the 2016–17 scores across the two types of schools, only Marion P Thomas Charter school has underperformed relative to the three NPS. Among the NPS, 13th Avenue school has made significant progress with percentage of students who met or exceeded expectations increased from 10% in 2015–16 to 21% in 2016–17. Between 2015–16 and 2016–17, North Star performance increased by 13% and Team Academy improved by 10%.

Figure 14.5

Grade 8 PARCC ELA Trends Among Newark District Schools and Newark Charter Schools AY 2014–15 to 2016–17



Note. Source: Sadovnik et al., 2017-18.

Comparing district and charter schools, the percentage of children who met or exceeded expectations in ELA PARCC scores have been significantly higher for charter schools since 2014–15. Among the district schools, Avon Avenue has shown the most significant progress with percentage of children in 8th grade English Language Arts meeting or exceeding expectation increasing from 13% in 2014–15 to 44% in 2016–17. Among charter schools, North Star Academy has seen the most progress with the percentage of students who met or exceeded expectations increasing from 76% in 2014–15 to 86% in 2016–17.

There are many confounding issues that make it difficult to compare traditional public schools with publically funded charter schools. It seems significant that despite BAA's high student mobility and the mandate to serve every student who walks into the door on whatever day they arrive (traditional public schools), BAA has moved the student growth rate and student achievement rates of their students. They have not yet, however, achieved the student proficiency and outcomes overall that they had hoped to achieve. All children are not achieving on-grade level literacy proficiency by the end of the third grade. Social determinants for educational success and outcomes are strong, but not unchangeable. By attacking goals with multiple strategies both in teaching and learning in the school, as well as in ways to strengthen conditions and resources for families in the school community, one hopes with BRICK and with the BAASchool learning community that with these multi-pronged strategies, change is moving toward achieving those desired goals.

Newark Public Schools Regain Local Control from State

In 2018, after over 20 years under State control, the Newark schools came back under local control (March 2018). After a search for a new locally appointed superintendent of schools, the Newark Board of Education announced the appointment of one of its internal candidates, Mr. Roger Leone, as the new superintendent of NPS (July, 2018). Mr. Leone was a Newark native and an over 30 year veteran of Newark Public Schools.

BRICK and NPS Declare Success and Transfer BRICK Avon Academy Back Over to Local NPS Management

Early in AY 2018–19, BRICK declared success for its seven years of management efforts to turn around BRICK Avon Academy and quietly handed management of the school back to the district. *BRICK Avon Academy* reclaimed its former name of “*Avon Avenue School*.” Mrs. Charity Haygood remained as principal of Avon Ave School, as did all the other school-based administrators and teachers at the school—all NPS employees. Because the principal and staff all remained in place, the transition was made very quietly, only dropping BRICK from the name of the school.

BRICK, the Education Management Organization (EMO) continues to offer turnaround services to districts and schools as needed, but for now manages their own BRICK Achieve Community Charter School and the rollout of the \$29 million Promise Neighborhood grant. In May, 2019, BRICK also announced that it began a new partnership with the Marion P. Thomas Charter Schools network in Newark, which now become BRICK schools. As of June of 2019, all schools under BRICK management are charter schools. In the February 2019 “74 Million” article, Lee also talks about BRICK’s expansion plans to partner with schools in the Bronx, NY and Buffalo, NY, to bring the

BRICK model to schools in those districts. He states that doing so will create further proof points that the model developed in Newark, NJ can work in other distressed and historically traumatized communities as well.

Does BRICK and the Accomplishments of its 6 TFA Founders Support the Neo-Liberal Claims of TFA; Or is the BRICK Story an Exception to it?

What are the neo-liberal claims of TFA? A statement published by the *Socialist Worker* says:

TFA contributes to the dangerous and misleading discourse that claims poverty and structural inequality have little to no impact on educational outcomes. This irresponsible explanation provides Democrats and Republicans alike with a pretext to continue vicious budget cuts to public services and institutions under the guise that “personal responsibility” and “grit” are the main factors in determining a child's success or failure. *How Teach For America Threatens Black Lives* (October 22, 2015). SocialistWorker.org
<https://socialistworker.org/2015/10/22/teach-for-america-threatens-black-lives>

Teach For America, like many other turnaround organizations (e.g., 90/90/90, claim that poverty is not an excuse or reason for educational failure or mediocrity; poverty and accompanying conditions should not serve as a barrier to educational success. In their recruitment process, TFA seeks out bright, academically successful young college graduates who sign up to teach in underserved communities to make no excuses for failing to reach and teach and help their students to be academically successful. TFA asks recruits to be creative, to be accountable, to seek to continually improve themselves and their methods until they reach and help their students to learn. TFA asks their teachers to hold high expectations for all of their students, and to help all of them to learn and achieve. TFA asks its members to care deeply for their students, and to meet each student where they are to help them learn. TFA recruits young college graduates who are used to being leaders, to learning, to achieving, to leading, to not giving up. They expect

these traits will help ensure that they will be able to teach and help students in challenging circumstances. TFA does not suggest that poverty is not a problem, but rather that with exceptional teachers, students can transcend the negative circumstances of their lives through education.

The founders of BRICK definitely hold similar values to TFA, especially because at least half of the six founders came from a non-privileged, poor background and did overcome poverty through education and hard work. The founders of BRICK share an urgency for the critical need to help students acquire a strong educational foundation in order to build a better future for themselves, their families, and their community. However, the founders of BRICK believe in commitment for the long-term. They believe strongly in community-building and trust, both within the schoolhouse and extending out into the community. BRICK founders understand the undeniable influence and conditions of poverty and the challenges poverty presents, if left unchanged, to children, parents, and a neighborhood. While BRICK's belief and "relentless" efforts to work with teachers, parents and children to turnaround failing schools like BRICK Avon Academy and Peshine Academy into academically more successful schools, the founders have a broader vision of what services and changes are needed to promote and sustain children's healthy development. BRICK founders see the school as part of a neighborhood ecosystem for children and families. This ecosystem must be better connected through partnerships in order for children to thrive. Furthermore, BRICK acknowledges the effects of trauma experienced by children and families through poverty, racism, and violence. BRICK founders formed early partnerships for access to physical health, mental health, access to social and cultural learning for children; and for training for teachers and

parents to better understand the needs created by the “trauma-based experiences” of children. The BRICK founders had a long-term vision to begin by turning around each classroom, by turning around a failing school, while working to turnaround the unhealthy neighborhood conditions associated with poverty and racism. Their vision for changing a neighborhood at BRICK Avon Academy included working with families through building trust, listening, and seeking partnerships and resources that would slowly, dramatically change these conditions. BRICK founders recognized the difference, influence and change that would come about in academic achievement, if conditions of unsafe and unhealthy housing, violent neighborhoods, lack of livable wages, lack of access to healthy and affordable nutrition and health care were changed through community-building efforts and partnerships. While BRICK founders definitely saw education as the central pillar to positive outcomes for children in poor neighborhoods, they also believed that raising the bar would include building strategies on all levels to change the negative conditions with and for poverty—stricken families and neighborhoods.

This may not be different from the values and beliefs of TFA, however, it is definitely broader in scope and vision than TFA. “Personal and organizational accountability,” “relentless pursuit of excellence,” “building networks” and “building a scaffold for teacher and leadership development” are all terms used by neo-liberals, TFA and the BRICK founders. BRICK founders, however, have a very inclusive approach to leadership development, to respecting mature teachers and teaching practice (this, perhaps, deepened as they implemented BRICK Avon Academy). BRICK founders

preached “humility,” and “service–leadership,” and “respect for teachers” (“I won’t expect you to do anything I wouldn’t do,” said BAA Principal Haygood).

The founders of BRICK are all TFA members, and value their connection and experiences with the organization. BRICK founders have used their TFA network in their work of building the BRICK model. They share values and beliefs of this organization enough so that they seek out former TFA members within the Newark Public School system as recruits for BRICK Avon Academy teachers. However, these former Newark TFA teachers have a minimum of three years’ experience in the classroom in Newark Public Schools. They are not fully matured teachers, but they have certainly have a stated interest in going beyond the short two–year TFA time commitment, and remaining in Newark as teachers beyond their TFA contracts.

Finally, the researcher would say that the BRICK founders definitely hold some neo–liberal values. In the researcher’s view, most if not all of the BRICK founders would put the end of children’s well–being and achievement—and the means to getting to that end—above loyalty to the traditional public school bureaucracy. While not against unions, they are definitely against mediocrity that harms children, and against having to keep any employees who are not accountable for quality results in positions at the cost of having employees who are helping meet goals for student success (this includes any position from administrator, to teacher, to custodian or any staff member).

Privatization of Schools (Union–Busting, Private Governance vs. Public Governance and Transparency) to Allow More Flexibility and Efficiency

TFA is often criticized for sending inexperienced, young, poorly trained, “elite” outsiders into a school district to teach only for one to three years and then leave. TFA sometimes is accused of disrupting and displacing the long–term committed teachers

who mature “in place,” and who build long-term relationships with children, families and community and who honor culturally sensitive practices. Although often critical of the restraints of working within the educational bureaucracy because of the barriers that came with it, BRICK founders intentionally chose a path of working within the educational bureaucracy and WITH teachers within the educational system and union. The BRICK director/founder was often impatient with things and people that stood in the way of helping children to succeed, including the system, or the union that sometimes protected inefficiencies. He was, however, a firm believer in inclusion and in the concept of a neighborhood school open to ALL children—no matter how difficult that might have been at times. TFA sends highly motivated and academically successful young college graduates into traditional public schools, however, TFA as an organization does not build long-term relationships with faculties in public schools, or with schools and their neighborhoods. TFA is not there to develop excellence in all teachers and staff members in a school over the long-run in order to help children succeed. BRICK does.

While TFA receives criticism that their members are from “outside” the community, many teachers in poor districts across the United States do not live in the district in which they teach. Teachers in the school district may share cultural and ethnic backgrounds and experiences with their students, but many do not. In fact, BRICK founders do not all come from an underserved or minority background. However, like many career educators, they share a deep commitment to their students well-being and overall success. Over the years, BRICK leaders have also acknowledged the effects and trauma caused by historically racist policies, and the need to build confidence and pride in students. This is done by BRICK in part by building partnerships to address early

childhood trauma and family crises; by educating children about cultural heritage; and by supporting each individual child's education and development in order to help each to become a contributing citizen and a positive change agent. During the years between Anderson's tenure in the Newark Public Schools and the return of the Newark schools to local control (2015–2018), the mayor and NPS state-appointed Superintendent Chris Cerf created a Community Schools initiative in Newark. The initial pilot for the Community Schools effort during this period was in South Ward public schools. BRICK Avon Academy was one of the five schools chosen to participate in the Community Schools initiative. They may have served partly as leader and model, but also benefited from being a part of a larger district initiative. This Community Schools initiative was supported through the last of the Zuckerberg funding.

Dale Russakoff, author of *The Prize* (2015), did her investigative journalism research about the Zuckerberg funding to Newark from 2010–2015. She was able to shed light on a number of “back office” and political situations relating to the state-run Newark district. During her investigative research, she spent significant time at BRICK Avon and BRICK Peshine Academies, using them as case examples of NPS schools and what changes and effects the Zuckerberg funding may have had “on the front line” and for children and teachers in the schools. At the end of her book, Russakoff follows one of the BRICK founders in her decision to leave BRICK Avon Academy to teach in a local charter school. Russakoff ends her book inferring that charter schools are “better” and have more resources and supports than traditional public schools like (and namely) the BRICK schools. In some ways, Russakoff's inference parallels BRICK founder Lee's assertion that charters have more direct educational funds for each child in their school

than do traditional public schools, and in very specific ways. Russakoff describes how in BRICK Avon Academy, founder PW had an overcrowded class with high needs young children and little assistance or resources to support her/the children. In the charter school, PW had a co-teacher in a much smaller class, and a school social worker who was highly engaged to support PW with any child's needs. The questions raised by other researchers relating to traditional public vs. charter schools includes issues about charter schools having significantly less needy children, partly by virtue of the requirement for parental involvement with the school from registration through day to day. The claim by some that charter schools skim off the less challenged children is upheld in numerous studies. Indeed, there is evidence that charter schools are less equipped to deal with children who have more intense challenges or special needs, and indeed that they either do not accept these children or push them out (back to traditional schools) once they encounter them. This exacerbates the challenge for the traditional public schools, giving them less funding (funds sent to charters) but still having the mandate to serve every child. One main question is how can every child be served in a safe and excellent educational environment, be it charter or traditional public school, and how are both equipped to serve each child's special needs in a community where trauma effects children's ability to learn.

BRICK, the NPS, and a broad coalition of leaders in the education and higher education, social services and business community have come together in Newark to strategically address some of these problems related to education for young people in a broad initiative. The initiative's overall goal is to raise the number of Newark students who successfully complete a college or post-secondary degree from 14% to 25% by

2025. Certainly the efforts of creative reform efforts like BRICK, who sought to change the outcomes for children beginning in the heart of public schools in economically distressed communities as related in the present study, combined with broad-based partnership initiatives such as the current one in Newark offer hope for measurable and significant change. By creating and learning from models such as BRICK that support professional teachers and collaborative learning communities focused on student success AND partnering in broad based initiatives (cross-sector, and multi-tiered—local, state, federal) to recognized and change negative social determinants of health and education, communities can offer resources and supports for families and children to thrive and increase achievement and wellbeing of children in measurable outcomes.

B.R.I.C.K. Education Network (BEN): New name, New Branding and Identity, New “Network”

“Dominique Lee is founder and CEO of BRICK (Building Resilient, Intelligent Creative Kids) Education Network, a Newark-based charter management organization based in Newark that relentlessly knocks down barriers to students’ academic success so they can have an unimpeded pathway to unlocking their limitless potential.” (<https://www.the74million.org/article/lee-black-history-demands-we-break-down-barriers-and-build-up-kids-how-one-school-network-in-newark-answers-the-call>)

As of 2020, Lee and his board of directors have changed the “R” in BRICK to stand for “Resilient,” (formerly “Responsible”). “Resilient” aligns much better to BRICK’s recent work on *Adverse Childhood Early (ACES) Trauma* research and training. Additionally, BRICK now has formed what it calls the *BRICK Education Network* (BEN).

In 2018, the BRICK Education Network (BEN) crafted a partnership with the Marion P. Thomas Charter Schools in Newark, a charter school network founded in 1999 by Newark educators. The network includes three charter schools on three campuses in Newark: two elementary schools and one high school.

Thus, with BRICK Achieve Academy Charter school, BRICK currently (2020) manages four schools in Newark. According to their own media reports, BRICK is now in negotiation to open a charter school in the Bronx , New York, and also in Buffalo, New York (Region 2 and Region 3).

Avon Avenue School: 2020

Meanwhile, back at Avon Avenue School, Principal Charity Haygood still needed 125 laptops for students without learning devices at home to access learning during the COVID 19 pandemic. She explained to news media that 98% of her children did not have learning devices at home to use for remote learning. On March 30, 2020, Mike Rowe, the onetime host of Discovery Channel's Dirty Jobs, surprised Haygood (virtually) and donated 125 Chromebook laptops (\$25,000) for her to distribute to Avon students so that every student would have a learning device at home for remote instruction.

https://www.tapinto.net/towns/newark/sections/education/articles/avon-avenue-school-principal-gets-surprise-donation-of-125-laptops?fbclid=IwAR0P1I4LgoEs-hW6A3tPM1wAbJMOhguSz06lq6OAVJzh6vXyR_dBu9MLOKk

This bring us back full circle to the foundation laid by the BRICK founders at BRICK Avon Academy in 2010, when they successfully applied for the federal School Improvement Grant. Using the SIG funds, they built the infrastructure for technology in the 120 year old building, equipped classrooms with equipment and software for blended

instruction, and offered teachers professional development for using technology equipment and curricula for blended instruction and managing student data. Without this infrastructure and investment, the teachers and staff at Avon Avenue would not have been nearly as prepared as they were to teach remotely to their students during the pandemic.

Table 14.2 *Timeline Relating to BRICK Avon Academy in Newark, NJ*

Year	Date	Event
2009– 2010		BRICK founders planning year
2010		BRICK founder, D. Lee, shares proposal with Dr. Janey for BRICK to run a NPS failing neighborhood K–2 elementary school
2010	April	BRICK receives word that their proposal was accepted
2010	July	BRICK founders learn that they will be running BRICK Avon Academy (K–8) for the 2010–2011 school year
2010	July and August	BRICK founders begin to paint and prepare school for opening day of school (on short timeline)
2010	August	First BRICK Avon teacher institute—not able to get everyone there due to short notification of change in school leadership by NPS (rumors in the community that Avon Avenue was taken over by a charter school named BRICK)
2010	August	Door to Door campaign, neighborhood mural painting (BRICK) and first BRICK Avon Academy community cookout
2010	August	Governor Christie announces he will not renew/extend Dr. Janey’s NPS contract beyond June 30, 2011
2010	September	BRICK Avon Academy opens first year as BRICK
2010	Fall	Announcement on Oprah Show of Zuckerberg’s \$100 million matching gift to Mayor Booker for Newark schools
2010	Fall	Chris Cerf nominated by Governor Christie as NJ DOE Commissioner
2010– 2011	November to March	Series of school and community wide meetings to craft SIG grant application for BRICK Avon via NPS
2010	November	Cory Booker wins second 4 year term as Mayor of Newark
2011	January	Chris Cerf sworn into office as NJ Commissioner of Education
2011	February	NPS Audit by Chris Cerf’s company leaked to Star Ledger re: recommended Newark School Closings
2011	January – May	BELL partners with BRICK to offer extended day program with BRICK Avon for all 3–5 th graders (and for 3–8 th graders Feb–March)

2011	March	Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) finally signed between NPS and BRICK for BRICK Avon Academy
Year	Date	Event
2011	July	Cami Anderson begins term as fourth state-appointed superintendent of NPS
2011	August	BRICK Avon Academy awarded a 3-year SIG grant beginning in 2011–12 school year (only elementary school to be awarded a SIG grant in Newark)
2011	August	Two week teacher institute mandated for all BRICK Avon faculty for 2011–12 second year
2011	August	Second annual BRICK community cookout
2011	September	BRICK Avon Academy extends school day to 4pm (from 2:45)
2012	March	Superintendent Anderson announces 5–6 school closings; holds school-based community hearings. Closes all but one of proposed schools.
2012–2013	Sept–June	BRICK chosen/begins to run a second school, BRICK Peshine Ave (Pre K–8, a “Renew School”)
2012	September	BRICK extends formal learning/teaching day from 8:20 am to 4:15 pm (teachers paid extra hours out of SIG grant)
2012	Fall	Superintendent Anderson announces a unified high school enrollment process beginning this year (for next year enrollment). All 8 th grade students must rank their ordered preference for all NPS high schools in one unified application (excludes charter schools)
2013	March	Newark Teachers Union (NTU) members vote in new contract with new evaluation, including merit awards; and clause about mandatory waivers for teachers at Renew Schools
2013	April	BRICK is informed by Superintendent Anderson that BRICK Avon is now considered a Renew School and all teachers must agree to waiver to work per new NTU contract. This affects teacher extended-day pay.
2013	May and June	Teachers at BRICK Avon meet with NTU and with NPS administration to plead for exception to renew school waivers and extended day salary curtailment
2013	June	Cami Anderson dismisses all NPS attendance counselors in district reorganization
2013	August	BRICK annual leadership planning retreat (3 days)
2013	August	BRICK Avon teacher institute (2 weeks)

Year	Date	Event
2013	Summer	Governor Christie announces he will renew/extend Cami Anderson's contract beyond June, 2014; states that he does not care about local criticism of Anderson because he runs the schools not the people in Newark
2013	Fall	Cami Anderson announces One Newark Plan for unified school enrollment city-wide to a closed meeting of corporate and philanthropic education partners at NJPAC
2013	Fall	BRICK Avon Academy submits application/proposal to state of NJ to become a fast tracked charter school for the 2014–15 school year (based upon budgetary needs)
2013	October	Former Mayor Cory Booker wins NJ election as U.S. Senator
2013	November	NJ Governor Chris Christie elected to second term
2013	December	BRICK receives notification from state that they are one of four final applicants (statewide) for their charter school application
2014	Winter	Anderson announces plans for additional school closings and releases One Newark enrollment application for school in the 2014–15 school year. One Newark includes most charter schools, and some of the schools to be closed will re-open under charter operation. This sets off a barrage of community and parent questions and protests about school closings and One Newark.
2014	February	Anderson suspends four principals and bars a parent/PTA president from entering his child's school
2014	February	BRICK receives notice that they were denied charter school status (Superintendent Anderson was against it; other reasons given)
2014	March	Commissioner Cerf announces his resignation as NJ Commissioner of Education to work for corporate (Amplify) with Joel Klein
2014	May	Ras Baraka is elected new Mayor of Newark (signals a vote of no confidence for Anderson and Christie and advocates for returning schools from state to local control)
2014		South Ward Children's Alliance founded by BRICK
2015	June	Cami Anderson resigns as Newark Schools superintendent
2015	July	Chris Cerf appointed by NJ School Board as Newark superintendent

Year	Date	Event
2015	December	South Ward Community Schools Initiative (SWCSI) announced by City of Newark and Newark Schools
2016	April	Initial Grant Awards announced by Newark to five schools for “SWCSI” including BRICK Avon
2016	Fall	BRICK Achieve Academy Charter School opens
2016	Fall	Begin activities for SWCSI Community School activities
2017	November	Mark Murphy (D) elected NJ Governor
2017	December	South Ward Alliance (& BRICK) awarded \$30 million Promise Neighborhood Grant to serve South Ward families
2017	December	Chris Cerf departs as Newark Schools superintendent
2018	January	Chris Christie (R) completes second term as NJ Governor
2018	February	NJ returns local control of schools back to Newark after 23 years
2018	April	First school board election since Newark schools returned to local control
2018	May	Mayor Ras Baraka elected for second term as Newark mayor
2018	July	BRICK Achieve Charter School moves to Clinton Ave School location
2018	July	Roger Leon begins as locally hired Newark Schools superintendent
2018	August	Evaluation report by Metis on SWCSI Community Schools
2018	September	BRICK Avon Academy quietly turned back to Newark district as “Avon Avenue School” or “Avon Community School”
2018		BRICK Education Network assumes management of the Marion P. Thomas Charter Schools in Newark

Year	Date	Event
2020	March	\$25,000 /125 laptops donated to Principal Haygood so that all Avon Avenue School students can access remote learning at home during the pandemic
2020– 2021	TBD	BRICK Education Network developing schools in 2 other Regions (source: news media and website)

Chapter 15 Discussion

Introduction

In *Organizing for School Improvement*, Bryk et al. (2010) identify five measurable core competencies that all effective schools exhibit: leadership (the driver), parent engagement, teacher commitment and development, student engagement, and a coherent curriculum. Additionally, Bryk et al. argue that *trust* is an important component for successfully transforming a school from failing to effective (Bryk et al., 2010; Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Student attendance and strong performance outcomes for math and reading are reflections of these core components that are needed for an effective school. According to Bryk et al.'s research with the Chicago Public Schools, if any of these core components are measured as very weak (under 25%), then generally, the school will not be on a trajectory to improvement (vs. chaos, or dysfunction). The present study looked at the first four years of BRICK Avon Academy's efforts to transform the school and to turn it around from a "failing school." The design and focus of the present study were inspired by the approach and core components emphasized in the research of Bryk et al. (2011).

Addressing the Case Study Research Questions

The present case study of school turnaround was designed to examine the goals, structures, and strategies used by BRICK and the BRICK Avon community over the first three to four years of implementation, as related by stakeholders, researcher observations, and through documents and archives. As in Bryk et al.'s research, the present study also describes the important dynamics of *human capital* and *relationship building*, key to effective schools. The on-site research for the present study was conducted primarily

during the third school year (2012–13). Outcomes for student achievement over this same period are discussed. In addition, the present study investigated whether BRICK Avon was transformed, and, if so, how the transformation of BRICK Avon Academy into a professional learning community correlated with student achievement.

Leadership: the BRICK Model was Understood as “Teacher-Centered” and “Teacher-Led”

Both the quantitative and qualitative data suggest that teachers at BAA felt that they were given leadership roles and were given more voice in decision-making than they had experienced in the past. There is strong evidence that many BAA teachers saw themselves as leaders. In both surveys and interviews, teachers gave examples of their input in such areas as choosing curriculum, instructional design (including designing curriculum and use of time), ordering classroom supplies, and crafting student behavior policies. Although professional development (PD) was not viewed as strongly individualized in the first two years, data from the present study indicated that PD was more strongly differentiated to support teacher’s individual development by years three and four at BRICK Avon Academy (BAA). In the interviews, staff members at BAA also identified the BRICK model as being teacher driven and supported with all teachers working together toward the common goal of student success. Even though actually getting to this point was a process that was always being worked on, articulation of this goal by multiple faculty, staff, administrators and parents is evidence of a shared mission and goal.

Nevertheless, teachers indicated their initial skepticism when they heard about BRICK Avon being a “teacher-run” school. This skepticism about a school in which teachers were really valued and listened to was deep seated, built up over years of

teachers' experiences in the school system. The present study indicates a shift in the perceptions of teachers in having voice and feeling valued at BRICK Avon (beginning in year one and continuing over time).

Both the first year study of Zha, Owens, and Knauer (2012) and this present study show evidence that many members of the BRICK Avon Academy (teachers, staff, parents) began to understand and “buy into” the BRICK model early on. In the researcher's experience over years in Newark schools, it is unusual to see this sort of “buy in.” This is especially true when leadership is imposed on a school community, and on a “failing school,” where teachers often feel “blamed” for student failure, as was true in 2010 as BRICK stepped in to the school. Recall that survey data (Chapter 11) documented that teachers were quite positive about and committed to teaching at BAA. The evidence suggests that by the third year a majority of teachers at BRICK Avon understood their central role, “bought in” to the BRICK model, and were working together toward shared goals.

How were Leadership and School–Based Decision–Making Implemented?

The Principal Role was Split into Co–Leader Roles

Research suggests that effective leadership was a driver of all the other questions and outcomes. Effective leadership is one of the key levers to school transformation and school success. *Leadership* is identified as both the teacher as leader in the classroom; and, the principal to unite the school (Bryk et al., 2010). Research has identified the importance of leadership by the school principal to include the traits of vision, sharp focus, and acting as an innovative change agent to support high quality teachers with a

rigorous instructional plan in an innovative, relevant and engaging learning community (Bryk et al., 2010; Darling–Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Fullan, 2002; Ravitch, 2010).

Evidence in this present study indicates that the BRICK founders made research–based decisions about the design of the BAA leadership structure and systems that improve schools. In BRICK’s design at BRICK Avon, one prominent leadership design element was to separate the traditional school leadership model into a co–leadership model. There were 2 “lead” positions instead of just one, with the principal serving as the “instructional leader” and the school director in charge of school operations. This model, although not common in public schools, was described in the Mastery Schools model (Chapter 2), especially for turnaround schools. The school principal at BRICK Avon, C. Haygood, was a veteran teacher in the NPS system. She also had experience as a school administrator, as a vice principal at a K–8 elementary school. She had over 16 years of experience in the NPS District. She had not, however, been a school principal before she was appointed by NPS as principal at BAA in 2010. Data in the present study suggests that Principal Haygood was very positively regarded as a leader. She was seen by others at BAA as being an experienced educator, fair, and a strong builder of positive relationships with attributes as a listener “who could remember” every child’s name. Haygood gave each person at BAA the confidence and assurance that she believed in that person and his or her abilities. Haygood, however, was not the only leader at BAA.

As a high school teacher in NPS and the founder of the BRICK organization, Lee articulated a very clear over–arching vision that others could understand and embrace. You will recall Lee’s vision and indignation in Chapter 6 about the right of children in poor distressed neighborhoods to have access to high quality education at a local school

as *THE* new issue in U.S. civil rights. Without access to a quality public education, Lee asked, how could urban young people become engaged, empowered, and contributing global citizens? How could they make informed, positive choices for themselves and their futures? Lee clearly articulated a call to action that helped to serve as a unifying force for teachers and staff at BRICK Avon. Therefore, early in BRICK implementation, Lee wore two leadership hats at BAA. He was the operational director, bringing systems management to the daily operations that supported instruction and learning. He was also the visionary leader at BRICK Avon. Part of the requirements for turnaround (in both business and schools) is accomplishing some “quick wins” in the first year of the turnaround to demonstrate positive change and to support faculty buy in (Herman et al., 2008).

Part of the rapid transformation needed at the 150 year–old school was to upgrade the facility, especially adding technology. Managing the budget and getting the resources needed by teachers at the school, including technology, was part of Lee’s leadership role. His success in handling operations effectively and seamlessly helped free up the principal to focus on leading instruction and learning. His role also supported teachers in effectively supplying the teachers with the supplies and resources they needed to teach in a timely manner. The first year, Lee accomplished this through fulfilling teachers’ classroom supplies requests in a timely and efficient manner—a first–time experience for most teachers, as related by one in her interview. He also worked to raise additional funds for the school from private sources. During the second year, he shepherded the design and installation of technology resources in order to give every classroom access to the internet and technology tools for teachers and students by the beginning of Year 3 (AY

2012–13). The costs for technology were supported through the federal School Improvement (SIG) grant. The implementation and oversight of such a process (contracts, installation, purchases) in a large bureaucratic organization governed by so many laws as NPS was a tough job that was successfully accomplished as reported by teachers and staff in the findings of this present study.

In BRICK's case, both of these leaders were former classroom teachers, and both acted as co-leaders of BAA. BRICK's ability to "turn the tide" from hostility to partial acceptance may have been strengthened by having two leaders along with their founding team members enter into a hostile environment at BAA in August of 2010. The present study's surveys and research, along with the first year study's surveys (Zha et al., 2012) suggests that these co-leaders were able to gain the trust and understanding of BAA teachers by the end of the first year of implementation. The co-leaders' overall behaviors and actions at BAA showed respect, humility, and a willingness to listen and support teachers. This leadership behavior, in turn, further supported the "buy in" of teachers and staff. The leaders demonstrated and modeled BRICK's core belief in "a teacher centered" school where teachers are the "heart" of the school.

Bryk et al. (2010) give compelling data from Chicago (from pre-NCLB research) that engaging the stakeholders in meaningful partnerships which are focused on student achievement can make all the difference in traditionally failing inner city schools. Strong partnership requires trust. The process of building trust in a school begins with the school leadership, i.e., the principal, or, as in the case of BRICK Avon Academy, the principal (Haygood) AND the founder and operations director (Lee), who were the school co-leaders. Additionally, the entire initial BRICK leadership team (6 founders) had to work

together to demonstrate integrity and honesty and to put their words (vision and mission) into everyday actions at the school. Bryk and Schneider write:

Centrality of Principal Leadership: Given the asymmetry of power in urban school communities, the actions that principals take play a key role in developing and sustaining relational trust. Principals establish both respect and personal regard when they acknowledge the vulnerabilities of others, actively listen to their concerns and eschew arbitrary actions. If principals couple this with a compelling school vision, and if their behavior can be understood as advancing this vision, their integrity is affirmed. Then, assuming principals are competent in the management of day-to-day school affairs, an overall ethos conducive to trust is likely to emerge (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 137).

Bryk and Schneider predict that trust will be found in the daily interactions in schools. “Trust is rooted on the micro dynamics of day-to-day social interactions among teachers, principals, and parents and the discernments that various participants make about these interactions” (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p.116–117).

Building Trust

The findings in the present study demonstrate strong evidence of trust at BRICK Avon in several specific ways. In the present study, teachers’ most frequent open-ended responses to ways that teachers were supported in their teaching at BAA were related to teachers being supported by administrators and by one another. Their responses included “coaching, teachers supporting one another in academics and with student behavior, being listened to and given voice, and being supported with student behavior.” These responses indicate that teachers felt respected, listened to, and supported in their teaching. The responses also indicate that student behavior was an important concern to them, besides academics and teaching. In regards to this concern, teachers’ responses indicate that they feel supported by one another and by administration in matters regarding

student behavior. These responses about being supported also indicate that teachers felt trust in their colleagues and administrators.

Parents also indicated a high level of trust in the teachers at BAA. Parent survey respondents indicated overwhelmingly (93%) that “parents and teachers think of each other as partners in educating children.” Parents agreed that teachers and staff at BAA work hard to build trusting relationships with parents and community members; and that they respect the kids feelings and opinions and believe in protecting them from harm; and they improve their social skills. Overall, parent participants in the present study felt very positive about the adults working with the children at BAA.

In the interview findings two administrators mentioned the importance of being aware and giving teachers emotional support. Evidence of this can be found in the present study from the perspectives of teachers and staff members.

Collective Decision-Making

Collective decision-making and teacher buy-in are also related to trust. According to Bryk and Schneider (2002), “First, collective decision making with broad teacher buy-in occurs more readily in schools with strong relational trust” (p. 116–117). In the present study, teachers repeatedly indicate that they felt administrators were listening, and that this helped teachers to make modifications in what they thought was best. Administrators stated that “teachers have used their planning time as a team relatively effectively.”

Findings in the present study from both survey results and participant interviews about improvement efforts and reform at BAA show that trust existed amongst faculty, staff members, and administrators. For example, most teachers at BRICK Avon felt that

they were trying to improve their teaching, and many felt responsible to help one another to do their best. One teacher spoke of being valued as a teacher and about how the model respects and supports teachers in their teaching. She spoke about BAA being a work place that she looked forward to coming to each day. The fact that such an overwhelming majority of teachers and staff agreed that BAA was proceeding in a strong positive direction is important. The data reflecting this teacher outlook in this study are remarkably consistent across data points and remarkably strong. Trust is a necessary ingredient for sustained reform. When that trust is diffused across an organization, it's more likely to sustain the hard work of that change over time.

Furthermore, there is concurrence between the evidence in the present study and the work of Byrk and Schneider.

To be able to talk honestly with colleagues about “what’s working, what’s not” means exposing one’s ignorance and making oneself vulnerable. Absent trust, genuine conversations of this sort remain unlikely... In essence, trust functions as the social glue necessary for (professional community) to coalesce and be maintained. (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 116–117).

Teachers agreed that they spent time working together and with their administrators to improve their practice and to help students learn. Most teacher survey respondents agreed that they spent a lot of time discussing student data to plan changes to the instructional program or to plan interventions to assist students with individual learning needs (see Table 11.6). One teacher stated: “they (teachers) feel they can go to their administrator to ask, ‘how do I fix this?’ ... our administration has done a good job of letting us know that the door is always open” (Chapter 12).

“Third, relational trust foments a moral imperative to take on the hard work of school improvement” (Bryk & Schneider, 2004, p. 116–117).

Administrators at BRICK were successful in articulating the urgency of the need for change and the hard work they were asking teachers and staff members to undertake together. About two thirds of the teachers indicated that teachers took responsibility for improving the school and were willing to take risks to make the school better (Table 11.5).

The largely positive survey responses, the interview narratives, and the researcher's observations seem to show that BRICK leaders were focused upon and worked hard to begin building a culture of trust amongst teachers, staff and parents. By the third year of the present study, evidence shows that there was considerable professional collaboration amongst many of the teachers at BAA. Collaboration had to be built on trust.

One area of trust and collaboration where stakeholder perspectives differed was between teachers and staff members versus the BAA parents. While most parents (93%) felt that there was a strong partnership between parents and teachers/staff at BAA, teachers and staff did not share this same view. Only about half of the teachers felt good about parents' support for their work, and only about a third of staff members felt good about parents' support for their work. About two thirds of staff members agreed that parents and BAA staff members think of each other as partners in educating children. Some staff members voiced an opinion that some parents are not being responsible.

Parents' responses indicated that they believed that there was a strong partnership between teachers and parents. There could be a number of explanations for this difference in views between parents and teachers and staff at BAA. Parents may see the role of education and student achievement as more in the hands of professional educators than in

their own hands. Staff members were especially hard on parents, expressing a belief that many parents needed to be much more responsible and accountable. Teachers, on the other hand, seemed to understand the importance and the power of a strong parent–teacher partnership to move the needle on student achievement. Teacher participants in the present study were seeking and trying ways to build stronger relationships between school and home. Teachers were working toward a stronger partnership with parents but felt, in general, that there was still a long way to go to bring parents on board as active partners for their children’s educations. Administrators at BAA were actively engaging parents and seeking to connect with more/ all parents. The high transiency rate of students and families connected to high poverty made this an even more difficult challenge.

Distributive Leadership

Bryk et al. highlight distributive leadership, both formal and informal, as central to effective schools. Sharing leadership can promote teacher buy in (Fullan, 2006), especially in turnaround schools. BRICK’s model called for shared leadership with teachers. The development and practice of a system of shared leadership development was evident in many ways at BRICK Avon. There were formal leadership roles such as Grade Level Leaders for each grade. These individuals were asked to give input on many decisions, including curriculum decisions, and more (evidence was supported by surveys, interviews, and observations–attendance at grade level and vertical meetings). Most of the teachers spoke about the leadership roles that they played in helping to develop the curriculum and in collaborating to analyze student data for guiding instruction.

Additionally, there were examples of BAA administrators developing leadership and promoting teachers and administrators from within the school. Teachers were considered and invited to apply for promotions. For example, one of the teacher/ founder was promoted to be a vice principal in Year 2; an Avon Ave School veteran teacher was promoted to dean of students in Year 2; and the reading coach was invited by BAA administrators to apply and was promoted to a vice principal position in Year 4; and the BRICK Avon Academy vice principal/founder was promoted to the position of director of education for BRICK schools in Year 4.

BAA administrators recognized leadership that was demonstrated by GLL teachers and this sometimes led to other leadership opportunities and promotions. BAA administrators consciously looked for ways to develop and strengthen leadership roles and skills in teachers and others in the school, and to consider and promote internally when positions opened. One exception to this was one of the founders who was a teacher who completed her master's degree and obtained a supervisory certificate. For some reason unknown to the researcher, she was not tapped by her colleagues for promotion to administrative leadership. Subsequently, she left BRICK Avon after Year 4 to teach in a different Newark (charter) school (Russakoff, 2015).

The present study shows that BRICK founders learned a lot about leadership in the first three years. They learned especially about how shared leadership and responsibility had to be differentiated according to a teacher's experience (novice vs. experienced) and interest in taking a leadership role. Some teachers who took the plunge into leadership roles were eventually disappointed when their efforts were not recognized, utilized, or sustained. One teacher who was interviewed, a TFA alumnus, felt

that although the BAA leaders were sincere, they were not organized or sufficiently systematized to succeed with successful student outcomes.

Overall, the present study shows that teachers' reflections about BAA leadership indicate that they saw teacher leadership as a central value of the BRICK model, but also something that was still evolving. Teachers' comments indicated both an acknowledgement of the importance of giving teachers' voice and influence in decision-making, as well as the evolution of teacher leadership. Some teachers expressed wanting more voice and influence. Some teachers pointed out the importance of including teachers in decision-making for successful student outcomes. While teachers appreciated being listened to and given greater leadership roles and responsibilities, they did not present a view that everything was perfect or that the evolution of shared leadership was totally achieved at BAA by the end of Year 3.

Changes in Staffing over Four Years at BRICK Avon

Part of the successful transformation of a school centers around human capital and "who is on board." While the BRICK founders inherited the teachers who were at the school prior to their entry, there were many changes in the teaching staff over four years. By Year 4 (AY 2013–14), there were just four classroom teachers in Grades 3–5 who were at Avon Avenue School prior to BRICK's arrival who stayed to teach at BAA through Year 4 (the end of the present study). This included all three of the third grade teachers. The BRICK leadership used a winnowing process at BAA to shape their teaching faculty over the first three years of implementation.

Because BRICK was a part of the NPS system, they were also a part of the recruitment system for the district. The BAA administrators expressed their desire to

have more freedom to recruit and hire from outside of the district. However, as a part of NPS, they were more restricted to considering teachers who were seeking a transfer from within the NPS district. This meant that many of the teachers who were recruited to fill openings at BAA were teachers transferring from other NPS schools. In a period of time in which enrollment was rising at charter schools in Newark, other traditional public schools in Newark were being shuttered. This meant that teachers at schools that were closing were looking for other placements within the district. Being Teach For America (TFA) alumni, BRICK leaders also served to attract other TFA alumni to BRICK Avon. Of the new teachers hired on to teach at BAA during the first four years of BRICK's tenure, four K–5 teachers and four 6–8 teachers were TFA alumni who were continuing to work in the NPS system. A presence of younger teachers who had 4–5 years of teaching experience, who applied to transfer to BAA, and who were also TFA alumni contributed to the teacher “buy in” factor. These TFA alumni did not comprise a majority of the faculty at BAA. However, their background positioned them as “teacher leaders.” In fact, a number of these former TFA'ers served as Grade-level or departmental leaders.

While there are many factors at play in the decisions of teachers and administrators about who would stay on the teaching faculty at BAA from one year to the next, survey results from the end of both Year 1 and Year 3 indicate that many teachers hoped to remain at BAA for the following year. Some larger factors such as requiring teachers at BAA to agree to a longer formal school day also influenced teachers in their decisions about returning. Some teachers had personal family responsibilities for their own young children. The longer hours at BAA would require them to find responsible

after-care and assume additional childcare costs for their own children. Other teachers would have had to sacrifice additional after-school jobs that paid more than the extra salary being offered at BAA for the longer day. Some teachers were willing and able to try the longer hours and the associated additional pay. Some teachers welcomed the extra pay for extra hours as a benefit.

How Was Professional Development Implemented to Support Teachers and Students and to Develop a Professional Learning Community?

“Professional capacity systems” are called one of the essential elements for effective schools (Bryk et al., 2010). This component includes recruiting and sustaining highly knowledgeable, skilled and experienced teachers; resources and support for continual learning and improvement; and developing and supporting professional learning communities (PLC).

Changing climate, expectations, and accountability to create a professional learning community at any school, including BRICK Avon Academy, is a process that cannot be finished in one year. Turnaround and effective schools research which has examined schools with demographics similar to BRICK show that these schools (when successful) often take three to five years to show a positive change in results (Herman et al., 2008). Furthermore, those teachers and administrators who are involved in these schools must “buy in” before these positive results occur. Results from a teacher survey taken in the second half of the first year of implementation indicated that teachers believed that the BRICK Avon Academy was an effective workplace (Zha et al., 2012). Most of the teachers had strong positive feelings about this new BRICK model.

The present study suggests that much of the professional development conducted at BAA during the first two years was centered upon training and support for new math

and literacy curricula, and using new assessment programs such as STEP. Once the technology was updated and installed, professional development was provided to BRICK faculty and staff regarding the technology equipment and integration of technology in the classroom for both management curricula and management (systems like *Kickbox*).

The evidence in the present study suggests that the individualized PD was just beginning to be fully implemented by BAA's Year 3 (AY 2012–13). Interviews with the administrators (principal and vice principal) indicated that they felt they were just getting to the point this year where they could begin to focus more on individualized and differentiated teacher PD. Evidence in the present study indicates that nearly two thirds of the teachers felt that their PD experiences at BRICK Avon were “sustained, coherently focused, and related to my needs and the needs of my students” (survey and interview data). However, about half of the teachers felt that they needed more time to think carefully about, try, and evaluate new ideas.

While teacher perceptions for how professional development was delivered to them varied by individual teacher and by grade level, it appeared that the K–5 grades had more systematized individual PD than middle school teachers. Evidence in the present study suggests that PD was being strengthened and deepened in the third year of BAA implementation (surveys and interviews supported by observation).

School reform research uses both social capital and organizational development theories (Senge, 1990, Darling–Hammond, 2004). This research examines how organizations develop through relationship–building, creating effective teams, trust and communication. Other school reform research is based upon learning theories, including both cognitive and social learning and communities of practice theories (Brown &

Duguid, 1991; DuFour, 2006; Hord, 2004; Wenger, 1998). Professional Learning Community (PLC) reform advocates (Darling–Hammond, 2004; Feger, Arruda et al., 2008; Johnson, 2011; Tybec & Cuban, 1994; Spillane & Louis, 2008; Stoll et al., 2006) espouse teacher engagement and continual improvement of practice via reflection, data analysis, peer observation and feedback and other similar rigorous activities. Studies in recent years have successfully shown a significant correlation between PLC’s and student achievement scores (Zito, 2011). Thus, the work of BRICK Avon administrators and teachers to build a professional learning community and to continually improve teaching practices and to support teachers with individualized PD in order to help increase student achievement aligned with research and best practices about what works.

How were Key Strategies for Pedagogy and Instruction Developed and Implemented, and How Were These Assessed for Continuation, Modification, or Abandonment Over Time?

Emphasis on Early Literacy and Reading Comprehension

BRICK founders began with a core belief that early literacy and reading comprehension competencies were a key to how well students could grow into “owning their own education.” Research supports that children who are literate and proficient in reading and writing by the end of grade 3 will be able to tackle and succeed with learning in Grades 4–12 (Feister, 2010). Teaching critical thinking and reading comprehension were also stumbling blocks for teachers who were trying to teach students with so many differing learning levels and skills. The adoption and use of the Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress (STEP) reading assessment program in Grades K–3 was a program that helped to guide teachers in effective teaching. The use of STEP also unified teachers, parents, children, and staff at BAA around definable goals for reading and

literacy, and helped create a unified sense of urgency, and a sense of accomplishment for celebration when goals were achieved. One finding of the present study which remains insufficiently understood was that student literacy scores on standardized tests did not continue to progress after the third grade. The researcher suggests that perhaps there was a need to include fourth and fifth grade teachers in STEP so that they could help to follow through with the intensive teaching and assessment process for reading comprehension begun in K–3, and to help insure that students continued to grow in their reading comprehension in Grades 4 and 5.

Curriculum Development by Teachers

The initial MOU that BRICK signed with the NPS district allowed BRICK more autonomy than other schools in the district. Part of this autonomy was BRICK's ability to select some of the curriculum that they felt best fit the needs of their students. As reflected in this study's interviews, teachers felt that the BAA administrators usually asked for teacher input into the selection of curriculum for their grade level.

BRICK founders learned a lot from their first two years at BAA. They began by thinking that teacher teams could create curricula units, and the accompanying assessments (with backwards planning). They thought at first that this would be preferable to using existing or purchased curricula. Teachers engaged in creating curricula during the summer 2012. While some teachers expressed appreciation for being a part of this problem-solving and innovative process, others were not engaged in this process. The BRICK leaders learned that the effort to create curricula and assessments might be greater than many teachers wanted, or could handle. They began to recognize that some teachers were up for creative challenges, while others found support from

more scripted, pre-tested curriculum and programs. By year three, BRICK Avon was using a mixture of teacher-developed or modified curriculum (such as middle school math), school selected curriculum (such as STEP), district selected curriculum, and scripted curriculum (such as *Foundations* for phonics) and bended learning (technology software).

Time

A central part of developing and implementing pedagogy is time and space for teachers to learn and collaborate with one another around teaching and learning problems and successes (Bryk et al., 2010). There needs to be time to focus together upon what works for students based upon data and individual student needs. If successful, this collaborative work over time develops into *professional learning communities*. The present study indicates that BRICK was successful in encouraging and implementing teacher collaboration and learning communities, especially in Grade levels K–5. In the middle school, the collaboration of teachers was less by grade level and more in core subject departments (language and literacy, math, humanities, and science). Interviews and school observations revealed that adding more time to the formal school day helped to facilitate collaboration and the beginnings of professional learning communities at BRICK Avon.

Adding more time to the day also allowed teaching in 90-minute blocks for each subject, which teachers stated was more effective. Numerous individuals also cited the purchase, installation, and integration of technology through the SIG funds (completed before the beginning of AY2012–13) as a major milestone to support effective teaching.

Resources to maximize the quality of time is also a key to effective schools.

BRICK Avon members cited the upgrade and integration of technology in all the classrooms as instrumental in allowing teachers to use classroom computer centers and academic software to maximize these 90-minute periods for small group teaching and more individualized learning for students.

Trust

In addition to time and space, building trust amongst teachers and members in a school (as stated above) is a prerequisite for authentic collaboration and building professional learning communities (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). In the same way that teachers in this study cited the need for students to have a space to be “safe to be challenged, safe to fail” teachers must feel the same safety and space to be challenged and to not fear failure or judgment with their professional peers and/or supervisors (coaches and administrators). Therefore, one critical challenge for the BRICK founders at BRICK Avon was to build a culture of trust. A foundation of trust amongst adults at BAA could support teacher leadership and collaboration. It could also support willingness by teachers to take risks and try new ideas in their teaching. Trust was also needed for continuous learning and improvement amongst adults in the school—all centered on the academic success, development, and wellbeing of the students. While the survey questions did not specifically ask about “trust,” the positive survey responses of teachers, staff and parents about what was going on, the candidness of the interviews, and observations all supported a growing culture of respect and trust at BRICK Avon.

In their research about trust as a foundation for effective schools and its relatedness to teachers' buy in to reform measures such as collaboration, Bryk and Schneider (2002) state:

Moreover, our analyses document a strong statistical link between improvements in relational trust and gains in academic productivity (p. 116).

First, relational trust reduces the sense of vulnerability that school professionals experience as they are asked to take on the new and uncertain tasks associated with reform. In this regard, trust acts as a catalyst for change processes that instrumentally connect to improving academic productivity.

Specifically in the context of urban school reform, relational trust should facilitate teachers' efforts both to innovate in their classroom in order to develop more effective instruction and to reach out to parents in order to deepen their support around students' engagement in learning. Both of these processes are key to improving academic achievement. Research on school improvement has documented that teachers' orientation toward innovation is an important precondition for instructional improvement (p. 116).

The present study demonstrates in surveys, interview narratives, and researcher observations that relational trust was present at BAA and served as a foundation for teachers working together to analyze student data and plan instruction.

How was the BRICK Student–Centered Learning Environment Implemented? How Were Student Development and Student Achievement Assessed? What Were the Goals? What Were the Outcomes?

Given the conditions of poverty and crisis in many students' and families' lives, creating a student–centered learning environment faced on–going challenges for teachers and for everyone at BAA. The high student transience rates and high chronic absenteeism at BAA reflect this instability and demonstrate it. One or two students and their families with high emotional, social, and/or academic needs could consume and divert the energy of many BAA staff members that might otherwise have been directed to students with

high potential, or to the majority of students who might have needed less support to reach targeted achievement levels.

First and foremost, teachers and adults in a school community have to care deeply about the students and hold high expectations for each student. A teacher must believe in the students' ability to succeed in a way that is realistic, authentic, and culturally sensitive. Data in the present study show evidence that teachers believed that they tried very hard to teach their students and wanted their students to succeed. Staff and parents gave strong positive statements about caring and professional staff. One teacher gave an example about how she gave her phone number out to her students so that they could call her about work (or about life) in out of school hours. Several teachers spoke about creating a "family" environment for students in their classrooms.

Student Ownership

One overarching goal at BAA was for students to have "ownership of their work." This required that each student was engaged in learning and linked what they learned to something of relevance in their lives. A first grade teacher described sharing learning goals at the beginning of the year with her students. Several middle school teachers described creating "student choice." Another teacher described engaging students in tying reading about a history topic to current day situations. The BAA principal spoke about "how to put the work into the students' hands ... in BRICK's language we would call that student ownership of the work" and several teachers spoke about giving students as much choice as possible for engagement and ownership in their learning.

Differentiated and Individualized Learning and Support of Technology

Many teachers and staff cited the importance of the upgrade and integration of technology throughout the school classrooms. Accomplishing this supported individualized and differentiated teaching and learning through small groups and individualized computer centers in every classroom. Mr. Lee facilitated this major purchase and installation. He managed and saw it through to completion with financial support from the SIG grant. This allowed teachers and students access to technology in the classroom that revolutionized and supported the BRICK model's goals for individualized and differentiated student-centered learning.

Adding organizational and management support systems was also implemented at BRICK Avon. The vice principal described how technology management systems like *Kickbox* could be used by teachers and everyone at the school to manage and utilize student behavioral information. He mentioned how the program was being used for the Intervention and Referral Service (I&RS) system to track support and progress for struggling students.

Student Recognition and Incentive Initiatives

Other BAA strategies used to support student-centered learning included student recognition, reward, and incentive programs created by BAA. These included the BRICK Bucks program, where students chose how to redeem their "earnings" either at the school BRICK Bucks store or at BRICK Bucks activities, such as dances, ice cream socials, or other school events. These school social events were particularly effective for the middle school students. Other examples of classroom and school-wide events that celebrated

student academic success included quarterly honor roll events and an annual Blue Carpet event.

Arts and Team Sports

Another piece of the student-centered approach by BRICK was to include the arts and sports in the curriculum as a part of the educational process that was considered important for developing the whole child. Visual arts and vocal and instrumental music were provided to all students at BAA in the 2012–13 school year. The BAA administrators also added a second part-time visual arts instructor to insure all students had access to the class. The inclusion of language and the arts at BAA, despite budget pressures and cuts, demonstrated the BRICK commitment to education for the whole child and not only catering to test taking. Sports were also included and supported at BAA. There were situations where a student might be prevented from participating in football or basketball if his/her academic work was not showing sufficient progress. In this way, student participation in intermural teams could be utilized as motivator tied to academic performance. Other out-of-school hour activities and clubs like quilting, modern dance, yoga, basketball, field trips, Saturday morning tutoring, camping trips, and more all contributed to holistic child development.

Social and Emotional Learning and Support

The BRICK Buck incentives program had a wider purpose than academic achievement. As described in Chapters 6–8, the program was also used on a school-wide basis to reward positive behavior. Other social and emotional programs that were adopted by BRICK to create a positive learning culture included the *Responsive Classroom* for younger and older students. Advisories for the middle school students were a part of the

activities supported through this initiative. *PlayWorks* was another partnership program that supported positive and safe play on the playground and used these situations to reduce fights and violence during transition times (before school, lunchtime), and supported positive behavior back into the classroom. Participants in the present study reported that all of these as strategies made a difference in increased positive student behaviors and a safer school culture at BAA.

Health and Mental Health

Finally, a major area of concern for BAA staff was student need, especially in the areas of behavior and mental health; and their lack of access to health and mental health services to adequately address these needs. The leadership sought out partnerships and grant funds to provide more access to mental health and counseling services at the school, as a part of the overall strategy to serve the whole child. Adding a behavioral support staff position at BAA was part of the SIG grant proposal and award. In 2013–14, the BAA leadership and student support team actively sought out partnerships for additional mental health counseling services for students at BAA.

Student Grade Level Retention

Student grade level retention was a strategy that BAA leadership used as an intervention to insure that students would be on grade level. Research about retention suggests that this practice may be psychologically traumatic, especially for older students (Anderson et al., 2003; Jimerson, 2001; Shepard & Smith, 1989). Later research at Harvard (Schwedt et al., 2017) has suggested that retention might be effective for 3rd graders below proficiency as a strategy to increase short-term achievement, but would not affect high school graduation rates. This raises questions about whether retention for

short-term gains only is worth it for students in the long term. Despite this research, grade level retention has become a strategy in school reform policy in the United States. By 2014, there were at least 16 states that had enacted retention legislation and policies as an intervention strategy for 3rd graders who were not proficient (Workman, 2014). The strategy is to hold back students in 3rd grade as an intervention to give students more time and support to become proficient before they go on to higher grades. Third grade is a benchmark grade because the literacy and math skills acquired by 3rd grade are then used by students to drive their own learning with their skills in Grades 4 and higher. Without proficiency, students cannot tackle the learning in higher grades. (It's been described as "learning to read and then reading to learn.") The topic of retention is still a very hotly debated current (2019) policy issue in school reform in the United States, partially because of the debate about harm vs. benefits to students.

In 2010–11, BRICK leadership retained 24% of the students (136 of 560) in Grades K–7. These were students who were more than one grade level behind in proficiency levels in math or reading. Several teachers and parents in Year 3 asserted that those retentions did help a number of children to "catch up" and become much stronger students.

Despite this anecdotal information, it is unclear that the massive retention made after AY 2010–2011 made a lasting difference for a majority of the students who were retained in their grade level. Hopefully, the retention did not hurt these students in the coming years as some research suggests it might. BAA continued to use grade level retention as a strategy, however, more on an individual basis and as a strategy after targeted interventions had failed.

Other Factors in Student Engagement and Achievement Outcomes: Student Transience and Chronic Absenteeism

The present study's data show a 32% to 37% annual student transiency rate at BAA both before BRICK and over the four years of the present study. BRICK's 30–40% student transiency rate stayed about the same from pre-BRICK in 2009–2010 straight through BRICK's first four years at BAA. This level of student mobility affected daily teaching and learning at BAA. It seems likely that the both the high student transiency rate and the high chronic absenteeism rates might affect the strength of relationships between these students and their teachers and other caring adults at BAA. This in turn could affect learning outcomes, especially in the earlier grades.

If the absenteeism for BAA students could be reduced, it is likely that student learning and academic proficiency would increase. The researcher suggests that this is an area in need of deeper study and intervention. Recall that the BAA administrators were allowed by the NPS district to retain 24% of the students at the end of their first year (Table 7.2). Perhaps the fact that state-appointed NPS superintendent (Janey) had left the district, and the new superintendent (Anderson) had not yet started was part of the reason BAA got no interference or push-back from the district about this action. The other interesting fact in regards to these data is that NPS cut all of the attendance counselor positions in the district at the end of AY 2012–13.

How are Relationships Built (Teacher-To-Teacher, Teacher-To-Student, Student-To-Student, And Teacher-To-Parent)?

The data in the present study point to importance of the relationships fostered at BAA, beginning with a principal who knew all 600 students' names on a personal basis (parent), and with many teachers who extended themselves far beyond the school day to

their students. Survey data showed how positive teachers were about the school environment. “Teamwork” and “caring” were two of the most frequently cited words by teachers and staff to describe BRICK Avon. Teachers and staff also talked in the interviews about the central role of building relationships with their students. Listening to students and even giving out a home phone number so that students could call their teacher over the weekend were some of the strategies cited by teachers to foster relationships with their students. Parents stated that teachers cared and treated students with respect, and if they had a problem they could reach out to the faculty to resolve their concern in the best interest for their child. A BAA staff member points out that people at BAA are invested in a “community-based model” that works to build relationships with students and to address student needs.

How is School Climate Assessed?

Feeling safe is one important measure of school climate. In their responses, parents indicated in the school climate survey in fall of 2013 that the majority of parents felt the facility was safe. This was the response, even when crime statistics show that the neighborhood outside of the building is much less safe, with a high level of crime. Parents’ responses indicated that they felt the environment inside the school was safe for their child(ren), a top priority for all parents and especially those familiar with neighborhood crime in their daily lives..

The teacher and students in each classroom built their own culture, demonstrating the scaffolding of culture (Bryk et al., 2010) within any school. Data in the present study indicated that the classrooms were (for the most part) places where students felt safe. Culture and safety in places such as classrooms may differ from transitional spaces like

hallways, the playground, the cafetorium, and the school as a whole. Culture in these transitional spaces must be built by the entire school community.

The partnership with *PlayWorks* at BAA helped address student behavior, culture and safety on the playground, as well as in the school as a whole. The *PlayWorks* staff member helped bring a fair and orderly system of play to the playground. He helped teach the students teamwork and cooperative social skills, and about how to avoid negative confrontation. He described the change from the beginning of the year, when fighting was frequent, and how there are almost no fights in the Spring. This work on the playground and school culture in this space bridged into the classroom. Arguments that used to transition from recess to the cafeteria or classroom were now infrequent.

With regard to building a school culture, much of the evidence from observation, surveys, and interviews references the *Responsive Classroom* program. This program supported teachers in building and sustaining a positive culture in their classroom and in the school. In the lower Grades K–3, morning meetings helped to set a tone for the day and for each classroom. There is also reference to the many recognitions and celebrations of success on a daily basis, such as the BRICK Bucks program and the STEP celebrations. These events helped to build ownership and pride in the school for students. All of these strategies contributed to what parents, administrators, staff, and teachers reported as a positive change in the school climate at BAA over the first three years of the BRICK implementation.

How Were Key Strategies Implemented for Engagement with Parents and Community to Support Student Achievement and to Build a Successful Learning Community?

The quotes provided earlier from Bryk and Schneider (2002) underscore the importance of authentic and effective parent engagement in an effective school as a

necessary component of effective schools, school improvement, and student academic achievement. The findings in this study show that building relationships with parents was a focus of major efforts at BAA during the first three years of implementation. At the end of the first year (2010–11), the BAA administrators' decision to retain a large percentage of the students K–7 who fell far below satisfactory progress and grade level proficiency created a heated dialogue with many parents (as one would expect). The researcher proposes that whether or not this was the best decision for the well-being of all the affected students, this action communicated a degree of urgency about students being below grade level proficiency as unacceptable. BAA had high expectations for students and retention of those students not proficient communicated this expectation and urgency in a way that had not previously been communicated. It was a signal to both teachers and parents that expectations for students must be raised and that the stakes were high.

Establishment of the mandated Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) intervention system for struggling students by and with teachers, support staff and parents—and coordinated by the vice principal in Grades K–5— further cemented an intervention system, process and dialogue that sustained the sense of urgency for student achievement at BAA. It engaged BAA teachers, staff, and parents as partners for each student in a focused manner, with specific agreed upon interventions and timelines. The interventions were varied: some were in the classroom, some were in extra support delivered to students by intervention coaches in small groups, and some were added interventions at home by parents. Timelines were set, interventions implemented, and then the results of these interventions for the student in question were reviewed by the same group (teacher, parent, staff, administrator) to assess progress, continuation, or

further action (such as beginning a case for the child study team). Putting this system in place helped to increase communication between school and parents, and helped avoid surprises surrounding possible retention since the dialogue was begun much earlier in the year.

Despite multi-faceted approaches by teachers to connect and build relationships with parents, many survey respondents and those interviewed felt that there was still much work to be done in successfully engaging parents in the learning community at BAA.

Nevertheless, despite diverse outreach strategies to meaningfully engage parents and caregivers as effective partners at BAA, the economic and social vulnerability of families was a major challenge. Parental engagement certainly increased each year during the first four years at BAA. However, the transience of families and other effects of economic and housing instability in the neighborhood made it challenging to reach a tipping point to effectively engage the majority of parents and families at BAA. While effective parental engagement can be a challenge for any school, it is a necessary ingredient for increasing positive student outcomes in neighborhoods where hyper-poverty and hyper-segregation abounds (Bryk et al., 2010). In the 2013–2018 BRICK Five Year Strategic Plan (2013), the shift on focus to include family and neighborhood wellbeing signaled an additional, broader strategy by BRICK (the organization) to create and address additional approaches and resources for building parental relationships and engagement at BAA.

How has Time been Structured to Support Key Activities such as Teacher Collaboration, Leadership, and Governance Structure? What Works?

Time—adding more time and adjusting how it’s used—was key to collaboration, learning, and student outcomes at BAA. The addition of two 90 minute grade level meetings each week when the school day was formally lengthened seemed to work well for Grade K–5 teachers. It allowed teachers to look at student data, to explore teaching strategies with the support of the reading or math coach, and to stay focused. It allowed teachers to have 90 minutes of small group reading rotations with their students every day. More time also allowed the instructional schedule to be changed to include 90–minute teaching periods (from 45 minutes) for core subjects of literacy, math, science and humanities or writing. The lengthening of middle school grade–level and departmental meetings was also cited by one of the coaches as a proposal made by the teachers that made a big difference when implemented.

Adding more time to the formal learning day got mixed reviews from teachers. Teachers viewed the longer days positively because it allowed more time for collaboration and planning that would not otherwise have been available. However, even the most engaged teachers at BAA stated that burn–out was a danger for both teachers and students. For example, one teacher middle school teacher stated that students did not have energy and focus for “after–school” tutoring once the school day was extended to 4:15 pm. Teachers stated that there was never enough time, but also stated that sometimes the added time just wore out students and faculty. It was a long day and sometimes “their brains shut down,” and everyone was just exhausted.

The vice principal for the lower grades shared how the BAA leadership team wanted to make the formal learning day longer, but were also concerned about teacher

“burn out,” which they felt was evident in some of the other local charter schools. This burnout in charter schools led to high teacher turn-over. BAA leaders, as reflected in the vice principal’s interview comments, wanted to balance more time for teacher planning, collaboration, and professional development with more time for student learning all within the formal day. The longer days created a tension between keeping the longer days rigorous and effective without causing burn-out and leading to a loss of experienced teachers at BAA.

Interview questions about the effective use of time and the length of the school day brought up many important topics and issues for BAA teachers and administrators. First, both teachers and administrator talked about the demands on teachers, the consuming nature of teaching, and the struggle to balance personal and professional life. Teacher burn out and not being able to maintain teacher longevity due to burnout was a problem at some charters that the founders of BRICK did not wish to replicate with a longer school day. Secondly, both teachers and administrators mentioned the importance of having more teaching time for better quality of teaching. Thirdly, they mentioned the importance of planning time and time to collaborate and to develop focused teaching during the school day. More time and its structured use were central to the BRICK model and its implementation at BAA, as it has been in other reform models.

How was the Budget for this Work Designed and Implemented? What Were the Budgetary Challenges Short-Term and Long-Term for Sustaining This Model and its Desired Outcomes for Students?

There were several key strategies that BRICK leaders employed at BAA regarding the budget and funding. First, one rule of operation by the BRICK founder was not to use external funding for staffing the school. While it was acceptable to externally

fund one or more positions needed at BAA to achieve certain outcomes, this could only be a temporary, short-term strategy. It was the BRICK founder's stated belief that human resources should be covered entirely by public school funds. Using time-limited, grant or outside funding for salaried positions beyond an initial year or two would be unsustainable for the organization. There were three initial staffing positions supported temporarily through the federally funded School Improvement Grant (SIG), as a short-term intervention. It was the BAA director's job to figure out how to incorporate and cover any SIG grant funded intervention positions that were important to the model's success into the normal annual public budget after one to two years.

A second use of the federal SIG grant funds was to address one-time "heavy lifting" purchases and systems support. For example, the upgrade of the school facility with technology and internet access, and the equipment and instructional software needed for every class had to come from the grant, not from the annual school budget. However, BRICK did utilize the SIG grant to pay for the additional time in the teachers stipend/salaries for working the extra hour per day each day. The BAA director and the principal had communicated with all teachers that this was a temporary arrangement. Once the SIG grant was over, the salaries for the extra time teachers were working would either have to be underwritten by public funds, if that was possible, or to cut back on the payments/ hours post SIG-grant.

Another challenge was the news for BAA after the NTU's contract approval (March 2013) that BAA would henceforth be considered a *Renew School*, and would no longer be eligible to use the SIG grant to pay teachers for the extra hours in the longer school day. When Superintendent Anderson told the BAA leaders that they would no

longer be able to pay teachers from the SIG grant for the extra school hours, it was devastating news for the BAA teachers. Furthermore, there were additional federal funds in the SIG grant that the district ruled could not be used for supplemental and enrichment activities for the students: activities such as the arts (dance, visual arts, karate, yoga) and which were designed for the students' enhancement and wellbeing. The BRICK director looked at the brighter side of the challenge, saying that the district's \$10,000 reduction per teacher's stipend for reimbursement of the teachers' extra hours each year would make it that much easier for BRICK to sustain the stipend for teachers' from public funds after SIG ended.

What are the Student Outcomes During the Implementation of the Model? How Have They Changed Over Time? What Lessons are Learned?

Student academic outcomes across four years were reported in Chapter 10. Important increases were made in student proficiency in math and literacy as measured on the NJ ASK standardized test. For example, 3rd grade ELA proficiency more than *doubled* from 19% to 47%. Some of this can certainly be attributed to the focus BRICK Avon placed on early literacy, and on the use of the STEP in Grades K–3. That first group of students who would have been in kindergarten in the first BRICK year (AY 2010–11) would have been in the third grade by 2013–14. The NJASK scores for 3rd grade literacy in AY 2013–14 was 47% proficient. While this may not be as proficient as one would hope to see in comparison with the NJ state average for third graders, this is a large increase in proficiency. Additionally, the 3rd grade math scores on the NJ ASK for the same year were at 61% proficiency and advanced proficiency (19% advanced proficiency). This is compared with 45% proficiency and advanced proficiency (11% advanced proficiency) for third graders the year prior to BRICK's arrival. Because the

math testing involves reading word problems, reading factors into math scores as well and would reflect, in part, on the students' reading abilities. It becomes difficult to track the cohorts by state standardized testing after 2013–14 because of NJ's change from the NJASK test to the PARCC test. By looking at the scores on the NJ DOE School Report Card (Chapter 10), we see overall progress for each academic year of BRICK in student math scores.

What does all this mean in terms of lessons learned? For one thing, standardized test scores are influenced by many variables year to year. They measure how a particular group of students takes tests and how they do on tests at a point in time each year. However, what they do *not* do is to show the academic growth of the same students over time. In other words, a group of third graders one year, is a totally different group of third grade students the next year. Yet, the scores are presented in the NJ DOE School Report Card site as if they are somehow the same group and comparable. Somehow, more is needed than a high stakes test to determine student progress from year to year.

How did Neighborhood Demographics and Trends Compare with Student Outcomes and School Climate and How Did They Influence the Development and Sustainability of a Strong Learning Community at BRICK Avon Academy?

The present study documents that BRICK Avon is located in a neighborhood with extreme poverty. BRICK Avon Academy children and families suffered from various traumas and hardships associated with poverty. Many of the students came to school having witnessed events that often cause trauma: violence in the home and/or community; death of family members, incarceration, lack of economic stability, housing and food insecurity, health disparities, to name a few. A BRICK Avon staff member pointed out the safety and order within the playground fence, as opposed to the space

immediately outside of the gates where gang members scope out the young people at play on the school playground for potential gang member recruits.

Access to affordable and quality housing was a major factor in family stability. Part of the high student transiency rate in this present study is due to family housing situations and conditions. Student transfers in and out of BRICK Avon during the 2013–14 school year indicated that nearly a half of these transfers were due to family relocation. What data in the present study show is the incredibly high rate of mobility amongst students and their families who attend BAA. Safe and affordable housing was one enormous factor affecting BAA families and their stability. There is little question about the influence that such high student mobility rate (30–35%) has on any school.

Although chronic absenteeism was discussed previously with regard to its impact on student achievement, the high rate of chronic absenteeism (32–38% annually) in this present study was also, in part, a reflection of neighborhood and family instability. Research shows that neighborhood conditions (including housing), and poverty are often correlated with health disparities (Leventhal & Brooks–Gunn, 2000; Braveman & Barclay, 2009) that in turn contribute to decreased academic achievement (Basch, 2010; Fiscella & Kitzman, 2008). Common chronic childhood diseases that occur with greater frequency in high poverty urban communities than in more affluent communities include childhood asthma and lead poisoning. These diseases may be related to genetics, but they are also greatly influenced by environmental factors. Substandard housing with insect and rodent infestations, second hand smoke, or other air pollutants (mold, vehicle or industry fumes) can cause or exacerbate asthma. Deterioration of lead paint or pipes can cause lead poisoning. There are many other environmental and economic factors

related to the environment that affect child health and well development. Crime and violence also influence the physical and mental health of children. Childhood health problems are often contributing factors to school absenteeism (Basch, 2010; Fiscella & Kitzman, 2008; Tara & Potts–Datema, 2005; Romero & Lee, 2007; Chang & Romero, 2008).

The present study discusses the need for mental health services for students that BAA administrators sought to address with staff, partnerships, and additional on–site counseling services. Correlations have been drawn in research between concentrated disadvantage and childhood mental health.

Concentrated disadvantage was associated with more mental health problems and a higher number of children in the clinical range, after accounting for family demographic characteristics, maternal depression, and earlier child mental health scores. Neighborhood collective efficacy and organizational participation were associated with better mental health, after accounting for neighborhood concentrated disadvantage. Collective efficacy mediated the effect of concentrated disadvantage (Xue, Leventhal, Brooks–Gunn, Earl, 2005).

This research points out that collective efficacy and organizational participation can counter–act these negative effects on child mental health. Building more cohesion amongst parents with the school and in the neighborhood might also be an effective strategy to mediate some of the effects of economic disadvantage.

Despite many economic, social, and health disparities community surrounding BRICK Avon Academy, evidence in the present study shows that teachers and staff at BRICK Avon worked hard to build trusting relationships with parents and community members. The present study documents the many strategies that BAA teachers and staff were employing in their efforts to increase their partnership with parents and the community.

In their study in Chicago, Bryk and Schneider (2002, pp.117–118) used core organizational conditions as measures of trust and school improvement. These measures included:

- orientation to innovation
- outreach to parents
- professional community
- commitment to the school community

The present study demonstrates that all of these conditions were well underway at BRICK Avon Academy by the third year of implementation.

What were the Challenges and Plans for Sustaining the Model, Especially after the SIG Grant was Over (AY 2013–14)?

There were certainly challenges to sustaining the BRICK model after the SIG grant funds expired. A part of the plan to sustain what worked after the SIG funding ended was to use the grant in the first year for one-time huge ticket items that would last beyond the grant. This includes large budget items such as building a new technology infrastructure and internet capacity into an over 100 year old building; purchasing and outfitting computer centers in every classroom; and other technology purchases (Smart boards, internet curricula like *Lexia* and *Dreambox*; data software programs like *Kickbox*). A second strategy was to limit staff positions funded by the SIG grant; and to get those few positions or contracts that were gained through the SIG grant transferred over into the NPS annual budget before the SIG grant ended. For example, the lower grade STEP and literacy coach was initially on a budget line in the SIG grant. She was encouraged to apply for a newly created K–3 vice principal position for the 2013–14

school year, thereby moving her from the SIG grant to the NPS annual budget. This move allowed BAA to keep this invaluable human resource after the SIG grant ended. This valuable staff member could continue to be an instructional leader for teachers of BAA's youngest children after the SIG grant ended.

Student health and mental health was an area of need. BRICK forged partnerships early on with the Newark Living Cities initiative that helped develop and implement a partnership for dental health via a mobile dental van for BAA students and families in Years 3 and 4, and beyond. BRICK was also working with that initiative to support more mental health and counseling services for students at BAA. The dean of students' position was funded through the SIG grant initially to support student behavior at the school. It is not clear to the researcher what strategies would be used to insure the continuation of the behavioral support position(s) from SIG budget lines after the SIG grant expired. It is clear in BRICK's 2013–14 five-year strategic plan that a shift in their goals to a much broader neighborhood approach was being outlined and shared. BRICK the organization was strategically positioning their organization and its design to address root issues of community poverty-related issues and trauma that affected the lives, needs and outcomes of students at BAA. Employing a broader approach to a healthier neighborhood would in part, also address the academic outcomes of BAA students. Having enmeshed themselves in the work of transforming a school, the leaders of BRICK the organization were now expanding their goals to include more than the school along. By taking a broader, neighborhood approach to addressing needs and issues of the community surrounding BAA, the leaders of BRICK organization hoped to address

some of the problems of children at the school through advocacy, community based services and partnerships, and policy change in the coming five years.

BRICK's model and vision is somewhat similar to Full Service Community Schools, where community resources are brought into the school; or like the Harlem Children's Zone (HCA) model of community education and human development; or like the federal Promise Neighborhood initiative. All of these initiatives and models speak to the inter-relatedness of systems that influence the education and development of children: an urban systems approach. Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development theory (1977) suggests the nested, interconnectedness of human learning and development in context with systems and environment. This theoretical approach concludes that it is not reasonable to expect schools to achieve reforms and transformational outcomes in isolation from social disparities (and solutions to them) that affect student lives and student learning.

Interestingly, effective schools theory and research is often paired with current neo-liberal school reform. Teacher leadership theory and human ecology theory, on the other hand, are not as linked with this political agenda.

Can a Teacher-Run School such as BRICK Operate Successfully Within and In Partnership with a Large Urban Public School District and Can Education Alone be Expected to Close the Achievement Gap?

The researcher would say that a teacher-run school could operate successfully in a district such as Newark if the district supports a policy and a mindset at the district and local school level that:

- is open to innovation and approaches that support student engagement and success;

- values teachers and their expertise as central to their mission;
- recruits and supports school leadership (principals) who value teachers and seek to share leadership at the school through teacher engagement in decision making; collaboration and building Professional Learning Communities, in data-driven instruction; and culturally sensitive student-centered learning; and holistic student development; and who builds parental engagement and partnerships for student support and success.

One counter question and argument to this first question is whether a district like Newark needs a “middle man” organization like BRICK (an extra layer of management) to do so, or whether the school can do so without BRICK. Perhaps if the district is stabilized and under local control, and if it is intentional with policy, strategy and staff to support this goal, it may be possible for the district to sustain the work begun by BRICK at the school.

To the second question, the researcher would say that education and school reform alone cannot build and sustain healthy communities without cross-sector and inter-sector partnerships, advocacy and research-based strategies. Broad partnerships that seek to address child and family well-being must include partners from health, education and higher education, housing, recreation and parks, transportation, employment and community development, to name a few. Building a public will for change and for equity is also required. However, schools are an important and critical partner and catalyst for such change and equity. School leadership could act as a catalyst and a lever for educational equity and show compelling reasons why broader equity and change are needed and could be cost-effective in the long run.

Historical and Political Context

Like so many historic events, timing can be everything in terms of what may be possible and what transpires. For the founders of BRICK, Lee gathered his group of TFA alumni in Newark and designed a proposal during the early part of Dr. Janey's brief tenure as state-appointed superintendent. Janey quickly established a culture for innovation and reform, outlined in his strategic plan called "Great Expectations." Janey reached out to researcher and education reform activist Pedro Noguera to advise the district based upon his research about race and education, and inclusive and culturally responsive educational reform. Noguera accepted Janey's invitation to pilot a "Broader, Bolder" reform initiative in Newark (2009–2011). He and Lauren Wells worked on the Broader, Bolder initiative with Central High School (principal Ras Baraka) and the principals of its elementary feeder schools. They utilized research from Chicago (Bryk et al., 2010), Oakland, CA (Noguera, 1996), and New York community schools (Dryfoos et al., 2005) to work on school reform in Newark. Lee met Noguera at one of Noguera's research presentations in Newark. Lee shared his idea for BRICK. Noguera then encouraged Janey to meet with Lee, to hear about the BRICK proposal. Lee worked with Janey's office during Janey's second year in Newark (2009–10), to refine their BRICK proposal with the superintendent's input. Thus, BRICK got the "green light" from Janey's office in April, and learned in June about the school (Avon) for the BRICK pilot. In June 2010, Janey got word from Governor Christie that his contract as NPS superintendent would not be renewed beyond the initial three-year contract that would expire in June 2011. IF Janey's contract had been extended, the BRICK team may have received more support and inclusion into the Great Expectations and Broader, Bolder Plan, especially during their first year. They may have had more central district support

over the first three or four years of their BRICK Avon pilot. However, Janey's contract was not extended and Governor Christie as NPS state-appointed superintendent appointed Cami Anderson in June 2011.

Thus, the BRICK team came under Anderson—a “TFA-friendly,” neo-liberal reform-minded” NPS superintendent. This served them well until the spring of 2013. Lee's application to the State to convert BAA into a charter school may have irritated (or enraged) Anderson. She vetoed the charter, which was a state-level finalist, and she blocked its charter (Russakoff, 2015). Did Lee's charter application contribute to her “punishing” edict under the new teacher's contract (March, 2013) to declare that BAA was now a “renew” school and could no longer pay its teachers on a different scale from other renew schools in the district for “extended day” hours for BAA's final SIG grant year?

What this meant for BRICK Avon Academy and its teachers was that they could not pay teachers for the extended day in 2013–14, despite them having secured funds and agreements to pay teachers from the SIG grant (\$50/hour flat rate, or about \$12,000–13,000 per year per teacher). Instead, the district would only allow BAA to pay its teachers a flat \$3,000 per year as an extended day “coach.” (For teachers, this worked out to less than \$10/ hour for 200 additional hours). This was a devastating blow to the faculty at BAA. They knew that the extra hours and salary would come to an end with the ending of the SIG grant, but they had been “promised” three years for this formally extended school day (8:20–4:15) experiment. The BAA teachers were fully bought in and committed to this third year—professionally, emotionally, and financially. When Anderson made this decision to disallow their arrangement beyond the 2012–13 school

year, BAA teachers met with the Union and with the superintendent's office, pleading with them to overturn her decision—especially because the grant money was in hand. It was not a question of funding. BAA teachers were put into a position suddenly (in April and May) to have to decide whether they would remain at BAA—a school that they were wholly committed to. The union representative working with the BAA teachers commented that they had never experienced teachers who wanted to stay at their school so passionately as did the BAA teachers. However, at the end of the negotiations, the BAA teachers were not successful in persuading Anderson to change her decision. A number of excellent teachers decided that they could not remain at BAA—one said he would become bitter if he stayed under these new pay conditions. He felt he could not be his best self or best teacher if he was bitter. Others stayed, but knowing that either their hours would revert to fewer teaching hours, and that their salary would reduce to the base salary (without the extra hours), or they would receive less than a third of the salary for the extra hours they worked. Additionally, BAA now had SIG funds reserved for the faculty in their longer day for the 2013–14 year that would not be used for this strategy as planned. There were similar stipulations in this decision that limited the types of activities BRICK could use from their SIG funds for student-centered activities and clubs.

Politically and historically, the timing of the inception and launch of BRICK at BAA influenced the model's implementation both positively and negatively in its first 3–4 years. Furthermore, the rapid expansion of charter schools in Newark from 2008–2014 affected the enrollment at many traditional public schools in Newark. Enrollments decreased in many traditional public schools as enrollment in charter schools increased. With decreases in enrollment came decreases in school budgets as well. In the spring and

summer of 2012 and 2013, BAA put some of their energies into marketing and enrollment at BAA to boost the school's budget (especially as the end of the SIG grant funding approached at the end of the 2013–14 school year). They began AY 2013–14 with a BAA enrollment of 600.

The second political/ historical event of note in BRICK's BAA launch and implementation was the announcement in September of 2010 on national TV of the \$100 million dollar challenge grant to Newark for education by Facebook CEO and founder, Zuckerberg (the same month BAA opened under BRICK's management). The announcement was made on the Oprah Show with Newark Mayor Cory Booker (now NJ Senator and former Presidential candidate Booker) and with former Governor Chris Christie. Both of these players (Booker and Christie) were public advocates and champions of charter schools. The \$100 million grant was to be matched by \$100 million in funds to be raised by Booker. The \$200 million was targeted at changing the face of education in Newark, NJ's largest school district. Dale Russakoff, a Washington Post investigative reporter, was watching the show that day and decided to follow the story to investigate and report what would happen to education in Newark and how would it change because of this \$200 million investment. The researcher and Dale Russakoff often found themselves in the same rooms from 2010–2014, as we both did our respective research at BRICK Avon Academy. Russakoff used BAA and BRICK Peshine as public schools that she followed in order to watch the effect of the Facebook funds on education in Newark. One chapter in Russakoff's book is a background interview with BRICK founder and BAA kindergarten teacher, Princess Williams (now FisAmee). Russakoff's

book, *The Prize: Who's in Charge of America's Schools* (2015), supports the slightly critical note about BAA and traditional neighborhood public schools vs. charter schools.

While BAA benefitted initially from the shared connections between BRICK founders and Anderson with TFA, BAA also benefitted from the departure of Anderson once she took actions less favorable to BAA beginning in the spring of 2013. These less favorable actions included her naming BAA a “Renew School” and blocking their use of SIG grant funds for continuing salaries for teachers for a longer day. It is possible that she also blocked BRICK’s management of other South Ward schools around the same time (a conjecture). BRICK’s positive relationships with local funders like Victoria Foundation and Prudential Foundation (through the Living Cities Initiative) may have also helped them weather changes in district leadership in 2010 and again in 2015.

A third event that shaped events at BAA was the mayoral election on May 13, 2013 of Ras Baraka as mayor of Newark in 2014. Baraka was an educator, a principal at Central High School, and a part of the Broader, Bolder initiative under Superintendent Janey. Baraka was a Newarker, son of activists Amiri and Amina Baraka, and a legacy South Ward resident and political activist. Jeffries was also an educator, an elected member of the Newark School Advisory Board, a South Ward resident and a strong proponent of charter schools. Baraka was elected on his platform to re–gain local control of the schools, and for his outspoken criticism for state–appointed Cami Anderson. (In some respects, the BRICK founder, Lee, may have been more aligned in political views with Jeffries than with Baraka.)

BRICK and Teach For America

Another potentially confounding factor about the BRICK model and initiative over time at BAA is about how the founders' affiliation with Teach For America might influence the model and its success. How would a TFA "neo-liberal perspective" affect the implementation of BRICK's model at BAA? Because of the BRICK founders' entry into teaching as TFA teachers, they held certain perspectives and values that shape the BRICK model. The researcher would argue that some of these values, attributes, and perspectives espoused by TFA recruits contribute to make the BRICK model's implementation strong. The TFA organization recruits college students with high academic achievement and strong leadership experiences from the best colleges and universities to become classroom teachers for two years in underserved, mostly poor communities. Most of these outstanding students have no teaching preparation in college. A criticism of TFA is that those placed in poor and minority schools are ill prepared for the situations they are placed in, and too often leave the schools after their TFA contract is over after two years (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). The study by Hammond et. al. showed that the TFA recruits were not as effective as new certified teachers when they stepped into their classrooms. (Once certified, over 2–3 years, their performance as teachers did match those pre-certified teachers.) The short tenure of the novice TFA recruits meant that they "cut their teeth" on poor children but left teaching within 2–3 years before they mature to become strong teachers (i.e., after four or more years of teaching experience). Some might argue that novice teachers cycling through poor classrooms is harmful for the most needy and most vulnerable students. There was also evidence that more experienced teachers are sometimes displaced by the TFA recruits, meaning that students with the greatest needs for effective teaching are losing

experienced, seasoned teachers and being placed with untrained, TFA novice teachers. Another criticism of TFA recruits is that they do not look like the students they are teaching, nor do they have cultural sensitivity to their students.

In the case of the BRICK founders, half of the founders' team was African-American. This was not typical of TFA recruits, in general. All of the team stayed in Newark as teachers beyond their initial two-year TFA contract. By committing to teach with the NPS district beyond their TFA contracts, they allowed Newark students to gain from them as more experienced teachers. The principal had been with the NPS district for over 16 years, as a teacher and as a school administrator. As teachers of color and teachers with longevity of professional experience within a community, the BRICK team members were outliers to the general TFA population and the research that criticized TFA's record. The researcher would argue that some of the traits in TFA recruits were positive attributes that were needed for the work of school improvement and reform. These TFA traits included: leadership, high expectations for students, belief in diverse teaching approaches to help engage students, innovation and creative problem solving, willingness to reflect and learn, not easily giving up, and a sense of urgency. Building a faculty with a mix of veteran teachers and former TFA alumni, all with at least 4–5 years of teaching experience and all with commitment and determination to work together for student success, was a strength that benefitted the implementation and outcomes of BAA. These attributes are often talked about in school reform for effective schools and effective teachers (Bryk et al., 2010).

The implementation of Professional Learning Communities and engaged learning communities may be even more challenged within a test-driven, neo-liberal era of

privatization of schools and demoralization of teachers. Bryk et al. (2010) gave compelling data from Chicago (from pre-NLCB research) that engaging the stakeholders in meaningful partnership that is focused on student achievement can make all the difference for positive outcomes at traditionally failing inner city schools. Engaging stakeholders and supporting teachers in classroom instruction are a combination of key, irreplaceable strategies for student engagement and achievement. These strategies are critical for school improvement (Bryk et al., 2010). By documenting the perceptions of the stakeholders during the building and change process, the present study may help guide more efforts for this work in the future.

Limitations of the Study

In the present study, the researcher was “embedded” at BAA as an observer for almost a year. There are some advantages to being an outside observer with fresh eyes in a non-threatening role. However, there are also some disadvantages to being an outsider. Access to internal communication networks and data can be limited, and one may miss key communications and/or events because of this. The observer is also dependent to some degree on the willingness of the administrators and members of the school to share data and other information. The researcher was grateful for the openness of the school administrators and others at BAA who shared data, information, and time.

The researcher in the present study comes with her own “lens.” Despite years of experience living in the Newark community and working with Newark youth and families, she is not a person of color with a personal lens of critical race. She does not have a background experience similar to the children and families at BAA. She comes with her own perspectives and biases.

One limitation in this study was not having access to more student–disaggregated data. A future study could delve deeper into individual student data in order to track student cohorts and student outcomes over time. The researcher depended more on school data and state data, with limited access to the school databases. A future study could look at disaggregated student data to explore outcomes related to student transience and chronic absenteeism. Additionally, the researcher would have liked to be able to include student voices in the study, and perhaps more parent interviews. There was, nevertheless, an enormous amount of data in the present study.

Finally, while the researcher did have “before and after” BRICK data on the students, she did not have “before” BRICK data from teachers and parent responses. The interviews do, however, provide some information about the perspectives of the teachers and parents “before” BRICK and over time.

There is much complexity and are many confounding factors involved in such a research study. There are histories of individuals of which the researcher may not be aware. The researcher is hopeful that the use of the surveys and personal narratives will ground the study in a balanced view from those who were engaged in doing reform at the school, even without the full perspective and history of “before” BRICK Avon Academy.

Contributions of this Study

This case study of BRICK Avon Academy looks at a turnaround effort using multiple sources of data over a four–year time period. The subject of the study was a “hybrid” model: a new *teacher–created and led* educational management organization (BRICK) contracting with the largest urban public school district in New Jersey to transform a neighborhood school. These factors make this study different from others.

The present case study demonstrates the many complex challenges involved in reforming large urban public schools in the United States, especially those which are housed in very old buildings, in large bureaucratic districts, and located in hyper-poverty neighborhoods. One of the contributions of the present study is documentation of the importance of school leadership, especially in a school turn-around situation. Leadership in two forms proved to be essential: 1) the co-leadership design of the principal's role and 2) empowering classroom teachers with leadership roles in curriculum design, grade-level leadership, collaborative application of student data to guide change.

1) Co-Leadership Design at BRICK Avon Academy

BRICK created their first school turnaround model with a co-leadership design, separating the principal's traditional *operational* responsibilities from the principal's traditional *instructional* responsibilities. This role was divided between two school leaders (instead of one principal). As in so many "turnaround" schools, in the case of BRICK the work to be done to change a failing school into an effective school was enormous. The school was ranked at the bottom of all schools in the district and the state on student standardized test scores when the BRICK team took over. The BRICK facility was over a hundred years old and completely lacked the needed technology infrastructure for modern instruction. The co-leaders managed to triumph over both major barriers. Additionally, both leaders came with humility, modeled respectful behavior, lead and listened to teachers, and shared the BRICK plan and its urgency for students. Gradually, through co-leadership, they were able to build buy-in and trust from the teachers, staff and parents.

Therefore, BRICK Avon's leadership design could inform other turnaround schools. The literature includes examples of co-leadership designed in various ways (Court, 2001; Court, 2003; Groover, 1989; West, 1979; Korba, 1982; Gronn & Hamilton, 2002), but rarely by division of tasks as was true in the present case study. Many charter schools build in the function of a financial and operations staff, but not necessarily as a co-leader. However, two charter school networks that do employ this co-leadership model are the Uncommon Schools and the Mastery Charter Schools. Examples from the literature (e.g., Spillane et al., 2001) suggest that co-leading a school by division of tasks is generally harder than it sounds. Nevertheless, the present case study documents a successful effort. The present study expands the paucity of research about utilizing a co-leadership model, and particularly a task-defined shared leadership model, especially for traditional public turnaround schools. It serves as a basis for further research about this model in education.

2) Teacher Leadership at the Heart of Change

The present study documents a school turnaround where teachers were valued, given voice, and placed at the heart of school transformation to support student success. As such, it stands as an example which argues against the federal NCLB policy of replacing the majority of teachers in school turnarounds, and demonstrates the importance of leadership as a driver of change. BRICK school leaders sought to accomplish change from within and build a positive learning community. The BRICK leaders acknowledged and focused upon *the teachers* as the key to an effective school and as the leaders of learning at BRICK Avon. Gradually, buy-in from the faculty made it possible to assign more leadership responsibilities to classroom teachers, who were

closest to the students, parents, and issues that needed attention. The present study demonstrates how distributed/ shared leadership among teachers and staff is key for building effective schools and the development of professional learning communities (as a subset of distributive leadership).

At the outset, BRICK Avon was staffed with teachers who were feeling constantly blamed for low student achievement scores, and also feeling suspicious and angry about their lack of control—always being “done to.” The BRICK founders recognized teachers as potential leaders (especially as the leaders in their classrooms), and invited them to be engaged as a team. They acted to build leadership from within the faculty and staff at the school. The focus of the BRICK founders was the technical core of teaching and learning, but they recognized and respected that teachers had to be supported as the drivers and leaders of effective teaching and learning for the students. Building trust and sharing leadership is important for a healthy learning community and for effective schools (Bryk et al., 2001). While there is extensive research in the literature about the importance of distributive leadership (e.g., Barth, 1991) and teacher collaboration (e.g., Darling–Hammond, 2014), the present study documents how this was done at BRICK Avon.

3) Student Achievement in Spite of High Chronic Absenteeism

The present study documented that over time there were moderately strong essential supports observed at BRICK Avon. According to Bryk et al. (2010), essential supports (leadership, curriculum, teacher support, student support, parent/community ties) must be strong to produce effective schools as reflected in student reading and math scores on standardized tests and high attendance. In the present case, despite high student

absenteeism and transience rates, moderately strong essential supports nevertheless resulted in improved test scores. Bryk et al. found in their study in Chicago that schools with poor attendance rates usually were *not effective* (and had low scoring essential supports and failure to increase students' academic reading and math scores). The present case study is an interesting variation.

4) Early Literacy as a Foundation for Academic Success

The present study provides a positive example about how important a strong focus on early literacy is in students' academic success. BRICK Avon successfully engaged teachers, students and parents in a reading program with integrated curriculum resources and activities for students in Grades K–3. This study demonstrates how this was accomplished at BRICK Avon by adopting an intensive criterion–based assessment and integrated curriculum, by implementing a consistent student motivation program, and by engaging teachers and parents in the process, including specialized intervention strategies, as needed. The data in the present study show that student accountability was designed so that students would share responsibility and ownership of the goals and responsibilities for learning with the teacher, and with the parent. Better mastery of reading by the third grade, in turn, has implications for the projected academic success of these students in future years. The current literature supports the importance and urgency of early literacy acquisition with a goal for reading on–level by the end of Grade 3 (Feister, 2010). This is seen as a foundation for student academic success, including high school graduation and avoiding the school to prison pipeline.

5) Parent Engagement and Partnership

Parent engagement and partnership is a hot topic in the current education literature. The present study contributes to parent engagement research because both teachers' and parents' perspectives about parent–teacher partnerships at BRICK Avon were documented through surveys and interviews. The present study documents the intensive efforts on the part of the BRICK Avon leaders, faculty and staff to engage parents as partners in order to support students. Despite this intensive effort, parent engagement and partnership was not an unequivocal success. Bryk et al. (2010) also found (consistent with other research) that schools in severely disadvantaged communities where neighborhood trust was low had a greater challenge in successfully building strong parent–community ties as an essential support.

The present study demonstrates a number of successful strategies used to build parental engagement at BRICK Avon. These include strong communication, welcoming parents, engaging them in volunteering and specific roles and offering specific activities for parents, providing support and education about home care and about learning at home, and engaging parents in building community partners and allies. These strategies are supported by research (Epstein, 2002; Bryk et al., 2010).

Parents' and teachers' perceptions about parent–teacher partnerships at BRICK Avon differed (survey data). In the present study, parents were highly satisfied with teachers and their partnership with teachers. Teacher survey responses indicated much less satisfaction than parents with support by parents for teachers' work. Teachers indicated that parents should be more involved. Student behavior was specifically mentioned in teachers' comments.

Despite the many strategies that teachers and the school administration used to engage parents as partners in the education of their children, the outcomes of these efforts did not seem to satisfy teachers, especially as they related to students' behaviors. The contrast at BRICK Avon between the parents' and the teachers' perceptions about parent-teacher partnerships seemed to come from differing expectations. It suggests an area for further study.

The BRICK Avon faculty and staff initiated intense efforts to engage parents, and they were moderately successful, especially from the parents' point of view. However, the present study also shows the challenges and complexities of building effective teacher-parent partnerships that will meet both teacher and parent expectations, and that will support maximum student academic outcomes.

Implications for Future Research

1) Newark and Teach For America

The young teachers who founded BRICK were all Teach For America alumni and current teachers in the Newark public schools. As pointed out previously, their tenure as teachers in the district after their TFA contracts were completed made them outliers as compared to other TFA alumni nationally because there seemed to be a higher percentage of TFA teachers of color in Newark than nationally, and more TFA participants who stayed as teachers in Newark beyond their TFA contracts. The present study documents the longevity of a number of TFA alumni as teachers in Newark Public Schools. This possible difference between national TFA and Newark TFA alumni is a point to explore more fully. Was there something about the Newark public schools that attracted and

encouraged TFA alumni to stay on as teachers with the district after their TFA contract, different from other places and school districts?

2) Measures for Student Learning and Success: Where Should Resources be Invested for Effective Schools and Accountability?

The present study raises questions about educational policy and investment. Driven by national initiatives such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), educational success is often measured largely through annual standardized testing. Much time is devoted in many public school classrooms to teaching that is focused upon students' performance on these annual tests. These standardized tests require a great investment of both time and budget resources, yet they contribute very little to building the effectiveness of how teachers teach and how students learn. Alternately, hands on assessments (and criterion-referenced assessments) can help teachers understand what students have and have not learned. Additional time and support provided for teachers to review and analyze student data and to collaborate with one another to their guide instruction to meet students' needs seems like a more effective investment in academic success and accountability.

While policies such as NCLB take a punitive approach for accountability that blames schools and teachers for student failure, accountability based upon creating true learning communities designed to invest in and support teachers and students seems better suited to creating effective schools. Too often teachers are isolated in their classrooms and held accountable for student success, but with little formal time to collaborate with other professionals, acquire new skills, or learn about new technology and curriculum. Schools that make teachers the heart of the change, like BRICK Avon, seem to merit investment.

Although research about learning communities already exists, additional research is still needed to address the ways in which other schools build effective learning communities in Newark or other cities. Research would further examine how inclusion of teacher leadership and collaboration in schools fosters an increase in teachers' techniques of teaching and learning, and how they correlate with student outcomes. This might be approached, in part, through bi-annual teacher surveys about leadership and collaboration, along with interviews of principals and teachers. Most important of all, public school advocates should work to see more use of such research findings to influence public school policy. Accountability should be focused more on serving teaching and learning, and less on standardized testing.

3) Student Achievement in Spite of High Chronic Absenteeism Rate

While the present study's outcomes are largely consistent with the findings of Bryk et al. (2010), the increase in test scores at BRICK Avon, despite the high rate of chronic absenteeism, also makes the present study an outlier. The conditions in this case (such as highly disadvantaged community and high student transience and poor attendance rates) are conditions that Bryk et al. (2010) found usually impeded school improvement in their Chicago study. Further research might show whether an increase in test scores continued incrementally with successful efforts to decrease chronic absenteeism (and maintenance of at least moderate essential supports) at BRICK Avon.

4) The Importance of Early Literacy Acquisition and Individual Student Achievement

The present study did not track individual student progress. Given the high transience rate at BRICK Avon, a future study examining *individual student progress*

over time—both in the early grades and as follow up in the later grades—at BRICK Avon could give additional insights about “what works.”

5) Shared Perceptions and Differences in Perceptions About Effective Parent–Teacher Partnerships

More investigation into the components of a strong parent–teacher partnership from the view of both parents and teachers might help better define the differences in perspectives found in the present study between parents and teachers. Questions for further research include:

- How are these expectations articulated by parents and teachers?
- How do strong parent teacher partnerships influence student success?
- Would these expectations and relationships change for either group, based on the demographics of the neighborhood?

6) Future Research: Connections Between Neighborhoods and Schools

BRICK focused intensively on using “Essential Supports” (Bryk et al., 2010) and other research–based best practices to turn around and increase student performance, and to guide this change from within the school with the engagement of the teachers and the school community. This is the focus for the present study. However, by their third year at BRICK Avon, the BRICK leaders articulated and shared a vision and a strategic plan for beginning to build and change the community surrounding the school into a more healthy community. They envisioned doing this through increasing access to critical resources to support families, and by engaging families in building healthier and stronger families and community. Six years later, they are well into this process.

Current literature shows that poverty and adverse neighborhood conditions negatively affect learning. Likewise, academic achievement increases when students and families are supported socially, with more health and economic resources, and engaged politically in partnerships with the schools. This body of literature comes from full-service community school studies (Dryfoos, 1998), and research connected with initiatives such as Harlem Children's Zone and Promise Neighborhoods. This research is also built on writings by Bronfenbrenner (ecology model for human development: 1977, 1979; 1994; 2005), Anyon (1997, 2005), and on public health research (Bausch, 2010; Braveman; Fiscella & Kitzman, 2008; Tara & Potts-Datema, 2005; Romero & Lee, 2007; Chang & Romero, 2008). Additional recent literature connects early childhood trauma with academic and life course outcomes (Adverse Childhood Experiences–ACE).

The development of BRICK's work over the past decade offers fertile ground for additional research about connections between neighborhoods and schools. The BRICK Avon model subsequently led to the BRICK South Ward neighborhood initiative, funded through a large (\$29 million) multi-year, federal Promise Neighborhood grant. This initiative led by BRICK aimed to improve access for families to health, educational, and social supports and services. Further research could document how students are benefiting from the neighborhood initiatives, and document changes in their academic achievement. Further research might also show indicators (e.g., trust, family engagement, similar needs and concerns) about how the initial school turnaround supported and facilitated a broader neighborhood initiative, and possible improvements in child and family wellbeing. Will the efforts and partnerships developed by these educators change the life course outcomes for students and families in the neighborhood, and, if so, how?

Research using both broad neighborhood demographics (census, etc), as well as surveys and interviews could contribute significantly to current understanding. Will current residents be supported by these initiatives? How? Will improvements and investments in the neighborhood decrease transience in the schools? Will neighborhood improvements contribute to gentrification of the area, forcing out current residents? Will the initiative improve outcomes for the children and families currently residing in the neighborhood, or contribute to changing who lives in the neighborhood—or both?

Conclusions

Ironically, this dissertation is being defended during the 2020 Covid19 pandemic. The importance of public education, especially to students in high poverty communities, and the disparities associated with it, are more clearly evident in the pandemic now more than ever before. Access to education, technology, and basic services (food, housing, safety) especially in poor communities are prominent issues. Additionally, the need to reimagine what U.S. public education should be and how it should be delivered on “the other side of the pandemic portal” is now being raised for discussion, especially in light of the fiscal impact of the pandemic on public education and other public institutions.

The present study about BRICK Avon Academy, a teacher-driven school with a research based model, highlights the importance of including grass roots and educators voices in this discussion. The present study demonstrates how teachers are at the heart of quality education, that instructional leadership and support drive an effective school, and that relationships and building a learning community are critical to educating the whole student. The relationships and trust that should amongst teachers as educators when we want children to succeed takes planned time and space, as does building in individualized

professional development. Building relationships between teachers and students' families is also critical to insuring maximum success for each student, and for timely interventions as needed.

Providing a curriculum and approach that allows for individual learning styles and small group instruction to address each student's individual learning needs is important, especially in settings like BRICK Avon where students often begin with limited skills levels. Ensuring that children acquire literacy skills in early elementary school is also critical to empowering student ownership of learning and academic success. This is a complex problem that, as the present study demonstrates, takes focus, curricula tied to assessments that help teachers understand student learning needs, and time for professional collaboration and professional development.

Technology is important to this process, but so is the in-person, hands on setting for addressing the whole child. Connecting learning to everyday problem solving and the social and emotional development of children (as well as intellectual development) are also very important. The health and safety of the physical space and well as the emotional and social space for children to learn is also a key component for success in education.

Finally, more flexibility and means in how to measure students success besides standardized tests (e.g., portfolios, project based learning, etc.) might help provide a more accurate measure of student progress and educational success, as well as a reflection of the complexity of the process it takes to build effective schools.

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Appendix A

Chapter 4

Table A1

Describes the Methods and Data Sources that were Used to Address the Research Questions and Sub-Questions.

Research Question	Interviews	Surveys	Documents & Archives	Field Observations	Demographics	Photos
What is the context for implementing this model?	NPS District leader, other experts? neighborhood and community leaders?		City and regional initiative documents	Various meetings, my own experiences as a community member and a student	US Census and Community Survey data; School data and demographics from school records and state report card—past 5–10 years	Photos of school and neighborhood
What is the BRICK Model and how is it understood by key participants?	Interviews with BRICK founders, archives; teachers and parents	Teachers and parents	BRICK documents and websites	Observations of school activities and community meetings		Current and historic archives
Leadership and decision making: how is it implemented?	Admin Team, School counsel members, Selected Teachers, Parents, consultants	Teachers and Parents	Council mtg minutes, archives	Admin meeting, council meeting, selected grade level meetings, ?BRICK board meeting?	Professional background information and length of time at BRICK	
Curriculum and Instruction: how is it implemented?	Admin team, selected teachers across grades and subjects consultants,	Teachers administ rators, parents?		Teacher and school observation; parent and community meetings		
Teachers—Professional Development: how is it implemented?	Administrators and selected teachers, consultants	Teachers	Documents for both BRICK and NPS district	Observations	Professional background information and length of time at BRICK	
Extended Day and Partnerships: what is it and how is it implemented?	Administrators and selected teachers, parents and selected partner leaders	Teachers and parents	School records and data	Observations of school activities, meetings		
Student Academic Outcomes	Administrators, teachers, selected parents (e.g. for students who have been there 3 or more years)	Teachers and parents	State report card, school data, individual student data	School and classroom observation		

Research Question	Interviews	Surveys	Documents & Archives	Field Observations	Demographics	Photos
School Climate incl Trust	Interviews with administrators, selected teachers, parents, staff, students?			School and classroom observation		School Climate incl Trust
How parents (and students, others) would tell their story?						Possible Participant research
Neighborhood influences + and minus				Neighborhood observations	2010 U.S. Census data, ACS data, and Newark city data; partners e.g. Coll for Comm Change	Yes—possible participant research
Key elements and issues, e.g., Student mobility, early childhood development, etc	Interviews with BRICK early childhood consultants, school leaders, district leaders, partners, experts				2010 U.S. Census data, ACS data, and Newark city data; partners e.g. Coll for Comm Change; NJ state schools data; school student data	
Budget—basic, changes, SIG, private and other funding, partnerships \$\$	Interviews with school administrators, school leadership council members, partners	Parents and Teachers	Research/ advocacy Analysis of schools budgets and funding; School budget documents	School observation	Research/ advocacy Analysis of NJ schools and NCLB budgets and funding	

Table A2

School data was collected and analyzed to determine student academic achievement and process; Table A2 lists the data sources.

	School level	Grade level	Class level
Federal Census other			
State level	School report cards: literacy, math, attendance, mobility, lunch/ income	School report cards: literacy and math	
School-level		Assessments	Assessments
District Level			
Analysis	Chart for math and literacy by grade level and by year; comparisons: internal external		


Table A3

Shows how the FINDINGS/data were organized to answer key questions with consistency for the case study

	What it is and how it is done	Results achieved	Difficulties in implementation: internal, external	Difference by schools, state
Leadership and governance				
Teacher support and professional development				
Student centered learning				
Curriculum and instruction				
Parent & Community engagement				
Time and structure of the day				
School climate, trust				
Resources, including budget				

Document A1

Initial IRB approval form

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY Office of Research and Sponsored Programs ASB III, 3 Rutgers Plaza, Cook Campus New Brunswick, NJ 08901		P.I. Name: Knauer Protocol #: 13-428M
February 14, 2013		
Dorothy J. Knauer School of Public Affairs and Administration 111 Washington Street Newark Campus		
Dear Dorothy Knauer:		
(Initial / Amendment / Continuation / Continuation w/ Amendment)		
Protocol Title: "Building Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids: A Case Study of the First Three Years of Implementation and Student Outcomes of School Turnaround Model at BRICK Avon Academy"		
This is to advise you that the above-referenced study has been presented to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, and the following action was taken subject to the conditions and explanations provided below:		
Approval Date: 2/5/2013 Expedited Category(s): 6,7 Approved # of Subject(s): 550	Expiration Date: 2/4/2014 Currently Enrolled:	
This approval is based on the assumption that the materials you submitted to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) contain a complete and accurate description of the ways in which human subjects are involved in your research. The following conditions apply:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This Approval-The research will be conducted according to the most recent version of the protocol that was submitted. This approval is valid ONLY for the dates listed above; • Reporting-ORSP must be immediately informed of any injuries to subjects that occur and/or problems that arise, in the course of your research; • Modifications-Any proposed changes MUST be submitted to the IRB as an amendment for review and approval prior to implementation; • Consent Form(s)-Each person who signs a consent document will be given a copy of that document, if you are using such documents in your research. The Principal Investigator must retain all signed documents for at least three years after the conclusion of the research; • Continuing Review-You should receive a courtesy e-mail renewal notice for a Request for Continuing Review before the expiration of this project's approval. However, it is <u>your responsibility</u> to ensure that an application for continuing review has been submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to the expiration date to extend the approval period; 		
Additional Notes: Expedited Approval per 45 CFR 46.110		
Failure to comply with these conditions will result in withdrawal of this approval. Please note that the IRB has the authority to observe, or have a third party observe, the consent process or the research itself. The Federal-wide Assurance (FWA) number for the Rutgers University IRB is FWA00003913; this number may be requested on funding applications or by collaborators.		
Respectfully yours,		
 Dr. Beverly Tepper, Ph.D. Rutgers University Institutional Review Board, Chair		
cc: Dr. Alan R. Sadovnik		

Document A2

IRB signed consent form

Attachment 4-IRB

Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Dorothy J. Knauer, who is a PhD student in the Urban Systems Program at the Rutgers University in Newark, N.J.

Building Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids: A Case Study of the first three years of implementation and student outcomes of a school turnaround model at BRICK Avon Academy

The purpose of this case study is to explore the BRICK school-turnaround model and the processes used during the third year of its implementation as a teacher-led initiative partnering with Newark Public Schools; and, through stakeholder understanding and experience and through data, to explore its implementation during the initial three years at BRICK Avon Academy and its influences on student outcomes. Specifically, how have leadership, curriculum and instruction, teacher support and professional development, creation of a student-centered learning environment, and engagement with parents and community been implemented to influence student learning and achievement? How is the model and its implementation understood by those implementing it during its third year? What are some of the lessons learned, and how might this model and its implementation in the voices of its stakeholders be instructive for BRICK stakeholders, for other Newark schools, and for schools across the nation?

Approximately 150 teachers, administrators, staff, and school partners and up to 400 parents (surveys) will participate in the study. Teachers and parents will be asked to complete a survey which would take approximately 30 minutes. Approximately 60-100 teachers, administrators, staff, parents and partners will be invited to participate in either a focus group and/or an interview, each taking approximately 60-90 minutes. Each individual's participation will be confidential and will last approximately two hours. Those individuals who volunteer to participate in both focus group and interview and/or follow up interview will last approximately four hours. Total participation time is not expected to exceed four- five hours total.

If you agree to take part in the study, there will be no way to link your responses back to you. Data collection is confidential. I will not record your address, phone number, date of birth, etc. The focus groups and the individual interview sessions will be digitally recorded. However, no reference will be made about you in written or oral reports that would identify you or link you to this study. All information will be kept confidential by limiting access to the research data and keeping it locked in a secure location

The researcher and her academic advisors and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. Participation in the study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw at any time during the study procedures without any penalty to you. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable.

APPROVED

Date: 2/5/13

Subject's Initials _____
Approved by the
Rutgers IRB

EXPIRES
FEB 14 2014

Attachment 4-IRB

If you have any questions about the study procedures, you may contact Dr. Alan Sadovnik at (973) 353- 3882 or email sadovnik@andromeda.rutgers.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Subjects Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 848 932 0150
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

Consent for Participation in Interview Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Dorothy Knauer, a PhD student at Rutgers-Newark and a Newark resident. I understand that this interview is designed to gather information about the foundation and development of B.R.I.C.K. Academy. I will be one of a number of key individuals being interviewed for this part of the research.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
2. I understand that most interviewees will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by Dorothy Knauer. The interview will last approximately 90-120 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and subsequent transcript will be made. This helps to insure the accuracy of your interview. I understand that all information given will be held in confidence and participants will remain confidential and unnamed in any written report. If I don't want to be taped, I will indicate so in the appropriate area below.
4. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
5. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this study according to the terms above.

Participant Name (Print) _____

Signature _____

APPROVED

Date: 2/5/13

EXPIRES

FEB 14 2014

Approved by the
Rutgers IRB

Date _____

Subject's Initials _____

Attachment 4-IRB

Audiotape Addendum to Consent Form

You have already agreed to participate in the research study. We are asking for your permission to audiotape (sound) as a part of the study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the study. The recording will be used for the purpose of analysis by the research team. All transcripts and notes will be kept confidential and only accessed by the researcher.

Your signature on this form grants the researcher permission to record you during participation in the above-referenced study, to assist the researcher with accuracy of your responses.

Participant Name (Print)

Signature

Date

Principal Researcher Signature

Date

APPROVED
Date: 2/5/2013

EXPIRES

FEB 14 2014

Approved by the
Rutgers IRB

Subject's Initials _____

Survey A1

IRB Approved Teacher Survey

Teacher Survey School as a Workplace

- Please mark the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Teachers at BRICK Avon Academy work hard to help their students succeed.				
Teachers in this school really care about their students.				
Teachers share beliefs and values about what is the central mission of this school.				
Teachers share and discuss student work with other teachers.				
Teachers review overall trends in student data (e.g., absences; assessments; ontrack rates; grades; test scores) to guide their work.				

- Please mark the extent from None to Nearly All with each of the following:

	None	Some	About Half	Most	Nearly All
Teachers help maintain discipline in the entire school, not just their classrooms.					
Teachers take responsibility for improving the school.					
Teachers feel responsible to help each other to do their best.					
Teachers feel responsible to help all students learn.					
Teachers are really trying to improve their teaching.					
Teachers are willing to take risks to make this school better.					
Teachers in this school are eager to try new ideas.					
Teachers feel responsible for helping students to develop self-control.					
Teachers feel responsible when students in this school fail.					
Teachers feel good about parents' support for their work.					

School Leadership and Changes

- Please mark the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following regarding BRICK Avon Academy:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Teachers spend a lot of time discussing student data to plan changes to the instructional program or plan interventions to assist students individual learning needs.				
Teachers in B.R.I.C.K. Avon Avenue Academy feel that they are leaders in this school.				
Teachers respect other teachers who take the lead in school improvement effort.				
Teachers participate in instructional planning with teams of other teachers.				
Teachers are effective manager who make the school run smoothly.				
Once we start a new program, we follow up to make sure that it's working.				
We have so many different programs in this school that I can't keep track of them all.				
Many special programs come and go at this school.				
Teachers help insure that curriculum, instruction, and learning materials are well coordinated across the different grade levels at this school.				
There is consistency in curriculum, instruction, and learning materials among teachers in the same grade level at this school.				

Teacher Professional Development

- Overall, my professional development experiences this year at BRICK Avon Academy have:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Been sustained and coherently focused, rather than short-term and unrelated to my needs				
Included enough time to think carefully about, try, and evaluate new ideas				
Been closely connected to my school's improvement plan				
Included opportunities to work productively with colleagues in my school				
Included opportunities to work productively with teachers from other NPS schools				
Addressed the needs of the students in my classroom				

- Please add any comments you wish to add to elaborate on your answers to the previous questions**

- Do you hold a leadership position(s) in your school?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please indicate here _____

Open-ended questions:

- Please list three words which you feel describe the BRICK Avon Academy:

- Please list some of the ways that teachers are supported in your teaching at BRICK Avon Academy:

4. Please discuss some strategies you use to engage students at BRICK Avon Academy:

5. How do you engage parents as partners for student success at BRICK Avon Academy?

6. Please discuss some of the changes that you and others have helped implement to support student success over the past three years at BRICK Avon Academy:

Are there any other comments you wish to make?

• **Teacher Background**

1. Are you: ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Are you:

- ☐ African–American
- ☐ Asian–American
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ White, non–Hispanic
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Other

3. Grade Level (s) you teach _____

4. Subject (s) you teach _____

5. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?

- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Doctorate's degree

6. Did you enter teaching through an alternative certification program, teaching residency, or other non-traditional route?
☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please indicate which one here _____

7. Years of teaching experience _____

8. Years in NPS _____

9. Years you have taught at Avon Ave/BRICK Avon Academy, including this current one _____

10. I hope to remain at BRICK Avon Academy next school year: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Thank you for your participation.

Survey A2*IRB Approved Staff Survey****Brick Avon Academy Staff Survey
School As A Workplace***

Please mark the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following:

	<i>STRONGLY DISAGREE</i>	<i>DISAGREE</i>	<i>AGREE</i>	<i>STRONGLY AGREE</i>
Staff members at BRICK Avon Academy work hard to help students succeed.				
Staff members in this school really care about their students.				
Staff members share beliefs and values about what is the central mission of this school.				
Staff members share and discuss student work with other staff and teachers in order to address student needs.				
Staff members review overall trends in student data (e.g., absences; assessments; ontrack rates; grades; test scores) to guide our work.				

Please mark the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following statements about BRICK Avon Academy:

	<i>STRONGLY DISAGREE</i>	<i>DISAGREE</i>	<i>AGREE</i>	<i>STRONGLY AGREE</i>
BRICK Avon Academy is a great model for what public schools should look like in Newark.				
BRICK Avon Academy is proceeding in the right direction for educating our children.				
BRICK Avon Academy's rigorous curriculum and instruction is appropriate for our children.				
Parents and BRICK Avon staff members think of each other as partners in educating children.				
Teachers and staff members at BRICK Avon Academy work hard to build trusting relationships with parents and community members.				
Students' scores on standardized tests should be used to judge how well BRICK Avon Academy teachers are doing their jobs.				
The community should be a partner with BRICK Avon Academy to support programs and services and to help accomplish the school's goals for children.				
It is important to continue to provide families with neighborhood-based public schools				

Please mark None to Nearly All for each of the following:

	<i>NONE</i>	<i>SOME</i>	<i>ABOUT HALF</i>	<i>MOST</i>	<i>NEARLY ALL</i>
Staff members at BRICK Avon help maintain discipline in the entire school, not just their classrooms.					
Staff members take responsibility for improving the school.					
Staff feel responsible to help each other to do their best.					
Teachers feel responsible to help all students learn.					
Teachers are really trying to improve their teaching.					
Teachers are willing to take risks to make this school better.					
Staff members in this school are eager to try new ideas.					
Staff members feel responsible for helping students to develop self-control.					
Teachers feel responsible when students in this school fail.					
Teachers feel good about parents' support for their work.					
Staff members feel good about parents' support for their work.					

School Leadership and Changes

Please mark the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following regarding BRICK Avon Academy:

	<i>STRONGLY DISAGREE</i>	<i>DISAGREE</i>	<i>AGREE</i>	<i>STRONGLY AGREE</i>
Teachers spend a lot of time discussing student data to plan changes to the instructional program or plan interventions to assist students individual learning needs.				
Staff members in BRICK Avon Avenue Academy feel that they are leaders in this school.				
Staff members respect other teachers who take the lead in school improvement effort.				
Staff members participate in instructional planning with teams of teachers and staff.				
Teachers are effective managers who make the school run smoothly.				
Once we start a new program, we follow up to make sure that it's working.				
We have so many different programs in this school that I can't keep track of them all.				
Many special programs come and go at this school.				
Teachers help insure that curriculum, instruction, and learning materials are well coordinated across the different grade levels at this school.				
There is consistency in curriculum, instruction, and learning materials among teachers in the same grade level at this school.				

Staff Member Professional Development

Overall, my professional development experiences this year at BRICK Avon Academy have:

<i>Overall, my professional development experiences this year at BRICK Avon Academy have:</i>	<i>STRONGLY DISAGREE</i>	<i>DISAGREE</i>	<i>AGREE</i>	<i>STRONGLY AGREE</i>
Been sustained and coherently focused, rather than short-term and unrelated to my needs				
Included enough time to think carefully about, try and evaluate new ideas				
Been closely connected to my school's improvement plan				
Included opportunities to work productively with colleagues in my school				
<i>Overall, my professional development experiences this year at BRICK Avon Academy have:</i>	<i>STRONGLY DISAGREE</i>	<i>DISAGREE</i>	<i>AGREE</i>	<i>STRONGLY AGREE</i>
Included opportunities to work productively with staff from other NPS schools				
Addressed the needs of the students in my area				

Please add any comments you wish to add to elaborate on your answers to the previous questions

4. Years you have worked at Avon Ave/ BRICK Avon Academy, including this current one _____

5. Do you hold a leadership position(s) in your school

☐ Yes ☐ No

IF YES, PLEASE INDICATE HERE _____

Open-ended questions:

6. Please list three words which you feel describe the BRICK Avon Academy:

7. Please discuss some strategies used at BRICK Avon Academy to help engage parents as partners for student success:

8. How are students engaged as learners and citizens at BRICK Avon Academy?

6. Please discuss some ways that teachers and staff receive professional support at BRICK Avon Academy:

7. Please describe some of the changes implemented over the past three years at BRICK Avon Academy:

Are there any other comments you wish to make?

Staff Member Background

1. Are you: ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Are you:

- ☐ **AFRICAN-AMERICAN**
☐ **ASIAN-AMERICAN**
☐ **HISPANIC**
☐ **WHITE, NON-HISPANIC**
☐ **NATIVE AMERICAN**
☐ Other

3. Grade Level (s) you work with _____

4. Your role(s): _____

5. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?

- ☐ ***HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE/ G.E.D.***
- ☐ ***BACHELOR'S DEGREE***
- ☐ ***MASTER'S DEGREE***
- ☐ ***DOCTORATE'S DEGREE***

6. Years of working experience in Newark Public Schools _____

Thank you for your participation.

Survey A3*IRB Approved Parent Survey***Parents and Community Survey**

Please mark the extend to which you disagree or agree with each of the following statements about BRICK Avon Avenue Academy:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The BRICK Avon Avenue Academy is a great model for what public schools should look like in Newark.				
The BRICK Avon Avenue Academy is proceeding in the right direction for educating my child.				
The BRICK Avon Avenue Academy's rigorous curriculum and instruction is appropriate for my child.				
Parents and teachers think of each other as partners in educating children.				
Teachers and staff members at BRICK Avon Academy work hard to build trusting relationships with parents and community members.				
Students' scores on standardized tests should be used to judge how well BRICK Avon Avenue Academy teachers are doing their jobs.				
The community should be a partner with BRICK Avon Academy to support programs and services and to help accomplish the school's goals for children.				

Please use the categories excellent, good, fair, and poor, to indicate how would you rate the quality of the BRICK Avon Avenue Academy:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
How would you rate the instructional effectiveness of BRICK Avon Academy?				
How would you rate the conditions of the school buildings and facilities at the BRICK Avon Academy?				
How would you rate the safety and security of BRICK Avon Academy?				
How would you rate the effectiveness of BRICK Avon Academy at communicating with the parents?				
How would you rate the effectiveness of BRICK Avon Academy at communicating with the community?				
How would you rate the efforts of BRICK Avon Academy to educate low income minority students?				
How would you rate the academic programs provided to your child/children currently by BRICK Avon Academy?				
How would you rate the delivery of extra-curricular programs by the BRICK Avon Academy, such as sports, music programs, and clubs?				
How would you rate the overall quality of BRICK Avon Academy?				

Please list three words which you feel describe BRICK Avon Academy:

List three ways BRICK Avon Academy engages parents to support student success:

Do you notice any positive improvements at BRICK Avon Academy over the past five (5) years?

☐ Yes; ☐ No If Yes, please comment about what you have observed:

Are there any other comments you wish to make about BRICK Avon Academy? And/or about the role of parents at BRICK?
(optional):

(use back page to continue, if needed)

Please answer all of the following questions:

1. How many people are in your immediate family? _____
2. How many of these people are under age 18? _____
3. Does this child/ do any of these children currently attend the B.R.I.C.K. Avon Avenue Academy?
☐ Yes; ☐ No
 If Yes, please specify what grade(s) your child(ren) is/are in _____
4. How many years has your child attended BRICK? Avon Academy?
 Child #1 _____ (number of years at BRICK Avon)
 Child #2 _____
 Child #3 _____
 Child #4 _____

5. How many of these years were in the past three years (2010–2013)?
 Child #1 _____ (number of years in past three years from 0 to 3 years)
 Child #2 _____
 Child #3 _____
 Child #4 _____
6. How many years have you lived in the BRICK Avon Academy neighborhood?

7. If your children who currently attend BRICK Avon Academy have attended other schools, what are the names of those schools?

8. If your child/ren who is currently at BRICK Avon Academy previously attended a different school, what is the main reason you enrolled your child at BRICK Avon Academy? (circle one)
- a. We moved into this neighborhood
 - b. My child attended Madison Ave. and was transferred to BRICK Avon Academy for Grades 6,7,8.
 - c. I wanted my child to attend a school that goes until 4:15 p.m. everyday.
 - d. Other _____
9. Are you:
- ☐ African–American
 - ☐ Asian–American
 - ☐ Hispanic
 - ☐ White, non–Hispanic
 - ☐ Native American
 - ☐ Other
10. What is your best estimate of household income before taxes last year? _____
- a. less than \$20,000
 - b. between \$20,000 and less than \$30,000
 - c. between \$30,000 and less than \$40,000
 - d. between \$40,000 and less than \$50,000
 - e. between \$50,000 and less than \$60,000
 - f. between \$60,000 and less than \$70,000
 - g. between \$70,000 and less than \$80,000
 - h. between \$80,000 and less than \$90,000
 - i. between \$90,000 and less than \$100,000
 - j. Over \$100,000

11. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed? _____
- a. grade/elementary school
 - b. some high school
 - c. high school grad (or GED)
 - d. trade/voc school after high school
 - e. some college
 - f. completed community college/two year degree
 - g. four year college/university graduate
 - h. graduate school/professional school
12. Do you volunteer in any capacity with BRICK Avon Academy?
☐ Yes; ☐ No
If Yes, please specify in what capacity: _____
13. From what sources do you get most of your information about BRICK Avon Avenue Academy? (choose all that apply)
- a. child(ren)
 - b. written communication from schools/newsletter
 - c. child(ren)'s teacher(s)
 - d. friends/Family members/neighbors
 - e. local news media
 - f. the B.R.I.C.K. Avon Avenue Academy's website
 - g. other _____

Thank you for your participation.

Interview Questions A

IRB Approved Interview/Focus Group Questions

Administrator Interview/Focus Group Questions

Good day, thank you for agreeing to speak with me about your experiences at BRICK Avon Academy.

Would you please state your role at BRICK Avon Academy?

Prior to your role as an administrator at BRICK Avon Academy, what types of positions and roles have you held?

How long have you been an administrator at BRICK Avon Academy?

How would you describe the functions of your role here at BRICK? As an instructional leader, how do you support teachers? How do teachers work together with other teachers to support student learning outcomes? How has your role changed over the three years of implementation?

How would you describe the BRICK Avon Academy model and goals for student success?

How would you describe what strategies are used for successful student outcomes here at BRICK Avon Academy?

Leadership:

How is planning and decision-making for instruction and curriculum implemented at BRICK ? Who is involved in the choices and decisions made?

How is leadership shared at BRICK Avon? How has that changed over the past three years? How is the BRICK Avon model similar or different from other NPS school leadership?

What strategies have been implemented to support teachers at BAA?

Instruction and pedagogy:

- What are some of the core components for instruction at BRICK? For reading and language arts? For math ? Other subjects?
- How do teachers work together at BRICK to strengthen effective teaching and student outcomes?
- How are students engaged as learners at BRICK AA?
- What opportunities do you see in the area of instruction and pedagogy? and challenges?

- What are some of the resources critical to building and sustaining the progress to date at BRICK Avon?
- How would you describe current plans regarding transition to becoming an IRB school?

Professional development: How would you describe key strategies for PD at BRICK?

- What professional development opportunities are there at BRICK Avon?
- How is professional development carried out at BRICK? Please give examples.
- How would you describe your own professional development and specific ways in which professional development has worked for you at BRICK Avon?

Student-centered learning climate: How would you describe some of the strategies used to create a healthy learning environment at BRICK AA?

- How does BRICK Avon seek to meet the needs of the “whole child,” including the physical, cognitive, social and emotional needs of the child?
- What resources do you think help support this effort?
- What are some of the challenges to do this?
- How would you describe the learning environment at BRICK Avon Academy?
- What are the strengths of the learning environment at BRICK Avon Academy? Can you tell a story that exemplifies your point?
- What are the greatest challenges, in your view, for building and sustaining a healthy learning environment at BRICK?

Time:

How does the structure of timework to support the BRICK model at Avon Academy?

- How do time and the schedule support teachers—instruction, collaboration, and support?
- How does the schedule support student learning at BRICK Avon Academy?
- Are there any other issues related to TIME and scheduling you would like to comment on relating to needs and goals at Avon Academy?
- How does the extended day, formally until 4pm, and then until 6pm, affect student success at Avon Academy?

NPS:

- How does BRICK’s partnership with Newark Public Schools strengthen your efforts at BRICK for student outcomes?
- How does it inhibit or challenge it?
- How would you describe the relationship between BRICK Avon and NPS? How has that relationship changed over the past three years?

Parent engagement and community partnerships: What strategies does BRICK use to engage parents as partners for student success?

- How are parents engaged at BRICK Avon Academy?
- How would you describe the process for building parent partnership and engagement at BRICK?

- What, from your perspective, are some of the greatest challenges towards building and sustaining parental engagement and partnership?
- How do you manage student attendance and mobility at BRICK Avon Academy?
- Who are some community partners at BRICK Avon?
- How might other current needs be addressed by additional strategic community partnerships? How do other partnerships support work at BRICK Avon?
- How do those partnerships contribute toward the overall goals for student success?

Trust:

How would you describe strategies you implemented in each year to foster and build trust amongst teachers, faculty, and the BRICK “community” at Avon Academy? Please give examples if possible.

Budget:

How is BRICK’s budget similar or different from other NPS schools?

How would you describe some of the lessons learned about the BRICK Avon budget?

What strategies have been used to align budget with meeting needs and goals?

How would you describe some of the goals for the budget this year? Next year and beyond?

How would you describe any budget challenges that face BRICK Avon in sustaining the model and what’s working at BRICK?

Student outcomes:

How would you describe some of the greatest successes regarding student outcomes over the past three years?

Implementation and change:

Year #1:

- How would you describe the planning and the implementation of BRICK Avon Academy before and during Year 1?
- How would you describe the implementation of BRICK Avon in Year 1? Highlights? Successes? Challenges? Greatest lessons learned?
- How was the teaching faculty selected for year #1 of implementation?
- How did student outcomes change at the end of year #1? What were any major changes?
- How would you describe any major changes made during the year (#1)? Were there any changes made in Year 2 because of those changes in year #1?
- What three words would you use to describe year #1?

Year #2

How would you describe the planning and the implementation of BRICK Avon Academy for year #2, 2011–2012?

- How would you describe the implementation of BRICK Avon in Year 2? Highlights? Successes? Challenges? Greatest lessons learned?
- How did the teaching faculty changed for year #2 of implementation?

- How did student outcomes change at the end of year #2? What were any major changes?
- How would you describe any major changes made during the year (#2)? Were there any changes made in Year 3 because of those changes in year #2?
- What three words would you use to describe year #2?

Year #3 (current academic year)

- How would you describe the planning and the implementation of BRICK Avon Academy for Year 3? Describe any reflection and planning you were involved with
- How would you describe the implementation of BRICK Avon in Year 3? Overarching goals? Highlights? Successes? Challenges? Greatest lessons learned?
- How did teacher development and support change from Year 2 to Year 3?
- How are student outcomes changing thus far this year?
- How would you compare the similarities and differences between Year 2 and Year 3 BRICK implementation?
- What were some changes made during this year (3)?
- How do you believe student outcomes for year #3 will change or remain the same as year #2?
- How would you describe a challenge, which faces BRICK Avon Academy for next school year?
- How is BRICK leadership exploring new initiatives and avenues to continue building “best practices” and strong student outcomes?

How do faculty and staff support one another at BRICK AA?

Describe an example about a time when you needed and found support from others at BRICK?

Describe a moment of success at BRICK Avon?

How would you like the BRICK Avon Academy story to be told? Who (audience) might benefit from hearing/reading it?

Do you have any other comments you wish to add?

Appendix B

Chapter 7 Year 1

Survey Results B1

Teacher Perceptions about BRICK in Year 1 (AY 2010–11)

Teacher survey items were constructed from the Chicago Public Schools Teacher Survey and Schools and Staffing Survey with additional items tailored to the specific BRICK Avon Academy context. The teacher survey measures self-reported teacher attitudes and perception as well as classroom teaching practices.

Table B1

Teacher demographic characteristics by race and ethnicity from survey respondents

Race/Ethnicity	Number #	Percent %
African American	16	54
Hispanic	1	4
White	8	25
Asian American	1	4
Other	4	14

Note. Source: Zha et al., 2011. N=30

Table B2

Highest Level Of Education For Teacher Respondents

Highest level of ed. completed	Number #	Percent %
BA/BS	18	59
MA/MS	12	41
No response	0	0

Note. Source: Zha et al., 2011. N=30

Table B3*BRICK Avon Academy as an Effectiveness Workplace*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q1. Teachers at BRICK Avon Academy work hard to help their students succeed.	3.33% (1)	0% (0)	20.00% (6)	76.67% (23)
Q2. Teachers in this school really care about their students.	0% (0)	0% (0)	26.67% (8)	73.33% (22)
Q3. Teachers share beliefs and values about what the central mission of this school.	3.33% (1)	6.67% (2)	53.33% (16)	36.67% (11)
Q4. Teachers share and discuss student work with other teachers.	3.33% (1)	3.33% (1)	43.33% (13)	50.00% (15)
Q5. Teachers review overall trends in students' data (e.g. absences: ontrack rates; grades; test scores).	6.90% (2)	3.33% (1)	37.93% (3)	51.72% (15)

<i>N=30</i>	None	Some	About Half	Most	Nearly All
Q6. Help maintain discipline in the entire school, not just their classroom.	0% (0)	23.33% (7)	20.00% (6)	43.33% (13)	13.33% (4)
Q7. Take responsibility for improving the school.	0% (0)	17.86% (5)	14.29% (4)	46.43% (13)	21.43% (6)
Q8. Feel responsible to help each other do their best.	0% (0)	7.41% (2)	25.93% (7)	55.56% (15)	11.11% (3)
Q9. Feel responsible that all students learn.	0% (0)	6.67% (2)	10.00% (3)	56.67% (17)	26.67% (8)
Q10. Are really trying to improve their teaching.	0% (0)	10.34% (3)	13.79% (4)	58.62% (17)	17.24% (5)
Q11. Are willing to take risks to make this school better.	0% (0)	16.67% (5)	23.33% (7)	46.67% (14)	13.33% (4)
Q12. Are eager to try new ideas.	0% (0)	26.67% (8)	16.67% (5)	40.00% (12)	16.67% (5)
Q13. Feel responsible for helping students development self-control.	0% (0)	10.00% (3)	23.33% (7)	40.00% (12)	26.67% (8)
Q14. Feel responsible when students in this school fail.	0% (0)	16.67% (5)	36.67% (11)	30.00% (9)	16.67% (5)
Q15. Feel good about parents' support for their work.	0% (0)	56.67% (17)	20.00% (6)	10.00% (3)	13.33% (4)

Note. Source: Zha et al., 2011. N=30

Table B4*School Leadership and Changes*

<i>N=30</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q16. Teachers spend a lot of time discussing student data to plan changes to the instructional program or plan interventions.	3.45% (1)	6.90% (2)	55.17% (16)	34.48% (10)
Q17. Teachers in BRICK Avon Avenue Academy feel that they are leaders in this school.	3.57% (1)	35.17% (10)	46.43% (13)	14.29% (4)
Q18. Teachers respect other teachers who take the lead in school improvement effort.	0% (0)	11.11% (3)	70.37% (19)	18.52% (5)
Q19. Teachers participate in instructional planning with teams of other teachers.	0% (0)	13.97% (4)	51.72% (15)	34.48% (10)
Q20. Teachers are effective manager who make the school run smoothly.	0% (0)	10.34% (3)	72.41% (21)	17.24% (5)
Q21. Once we start a new program, we follow up to make sure that it's working.	0% (0)	17.86% (5)	57.14% (16)	25.00% (7)
Q22. We have so many different programs in this school that I can't keep track of them all.	3.57% (1)	28.57% (8)	46.43% (13)	21.43% (6)
Q23. Many special programs come and go at this school.	3.57% (1)	28.57% (8)	46.43% (13)	21.43% (6)
Q24. Curriculum, instruction, and learning materials are well coordinated across the different grade levels at this school.	0% (0)	33.33% (9)	51.85% (14)	14.81% (4)
Q25. There is consistency in curriculum, instruction, and learning materials among teachers in the same grade level at this school.	3.45% (1)	31.03% (9)	48.28% (14)	17.24% (5)

Note. Source: Zha et al., 2011.

Table B5*Teacher Professional Development*

<i>N=30</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q26. Been sustained and coherently focused, rather than short-term and unrelated	3.70% (1)	7.41% (2)	59.26% (16)	29.63% (8)
Q27. Included enough time to think carefully about, try, and evaluate new ideas	0% (0)	29.63% (8)	59.26% (16)	11.11% (3)
Q28. Been closely connected to my school's improvement plan	0% (0)	7.41% (2)	77.87% (21)	14.81% (4)
Q29. Included opportunities to work productively with colleagues in my school	0% (0)	17.24% (5)	72.41% (21)	10.34% (3)
Q30. Included opportunities to work productively with teachers from other NPS schools	25.00% (7)	39.29% (11)	28.57% (8)	7.14% (2)
Q31. Addressed the needs of the students in my classroom	0% (0)	10.00% (3)	60.00% (18)	26.7% (8)

Note. Source: Zha et al., 2011.

Survey Results B2

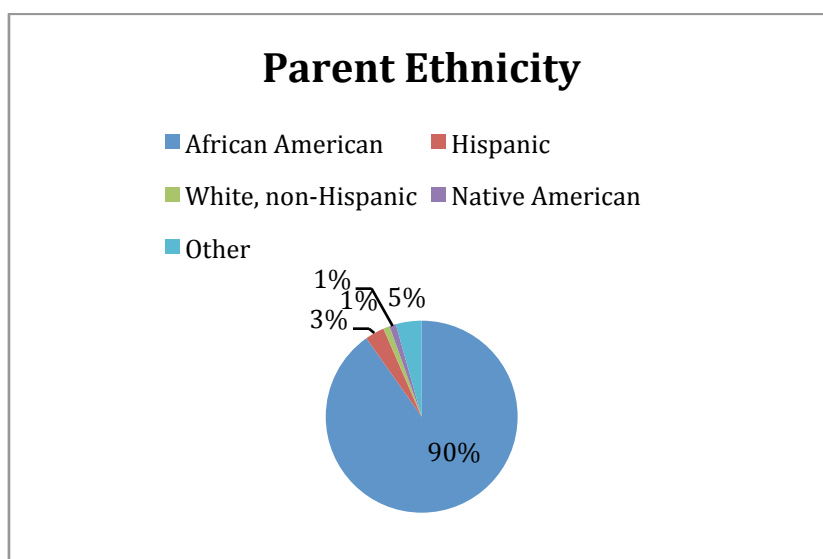
Parent Perceptions about BRICK Avon Academy in Year 1 (AY 2010–11)

Parents survey items were constructed by this study's researchers with specific attention to parents' awareness and evaluation about the BRICK Avon Academy model. It was also based upon Bryk et al.'s parent surveys and research in Chicago, as well as tailored to the BRICK Avon Academy setting.

Parent and Community Demographic and Parent Survey Results

Figure B1

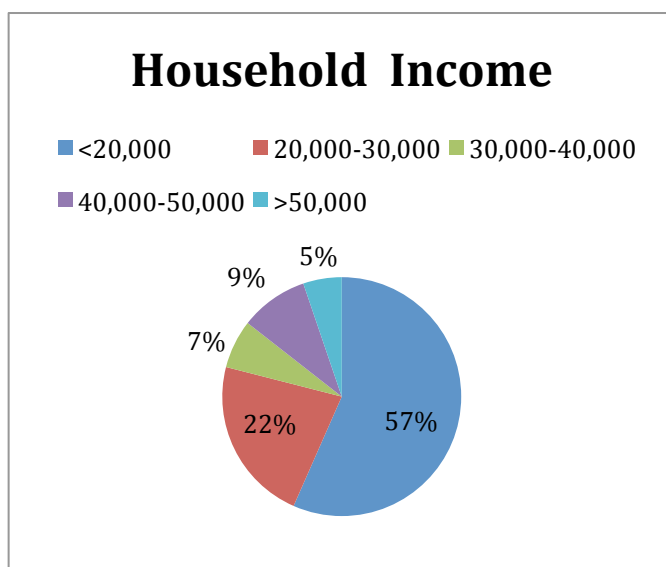
Parent Ethnicity. N=99 AY 2010–11



Note. Source: Zha et al., 2011.

Figure B2

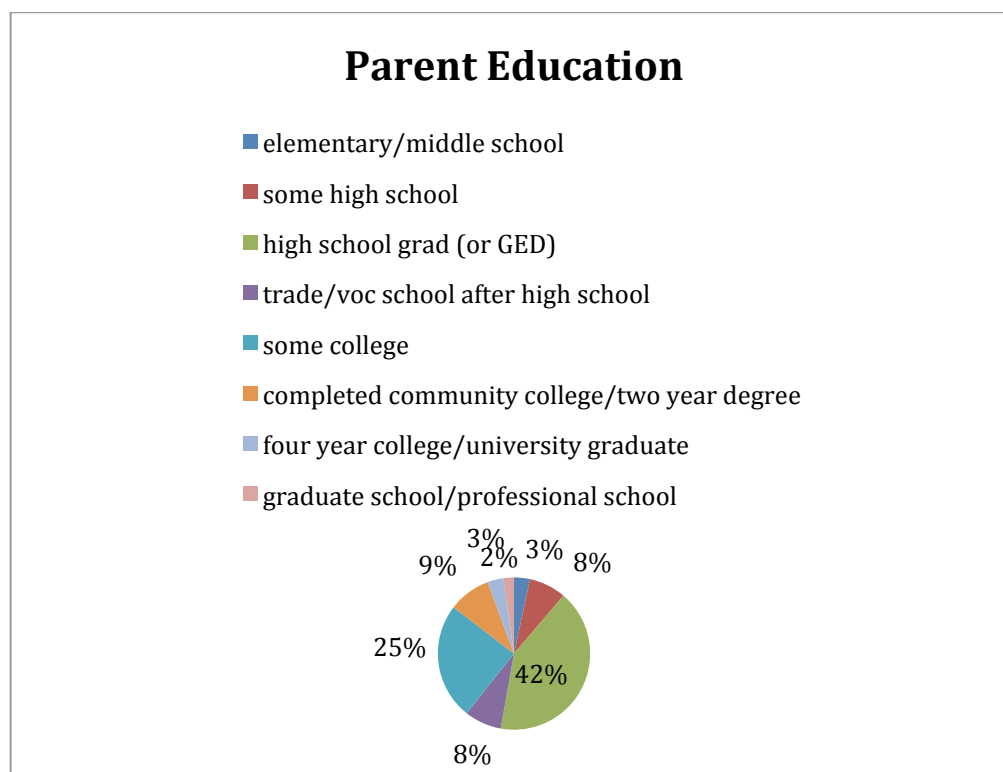
Household Income. N=99 AY 2010–11



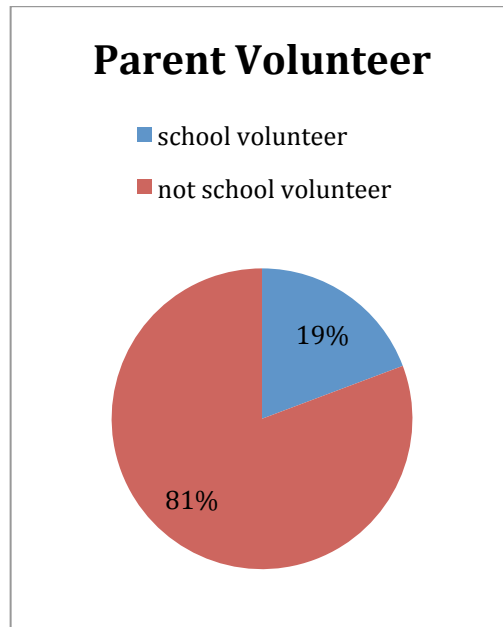
Note. Source: Zha et al., 2011.

Figure B3

Parent Education. N=99 AY 2010–11)



Note. Source: Zha et al., 2011.

Figure B4*Parent Volunteer. N=99 AY 2010–11**Note. Source: Zha et al., 2011.**Parent Survey Results for AY 2010–11***Table B6***Overall Quality of the BRICK Avon Academy. N=102*

N=102	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q1. The BRICK Avon Academy is a great model of NPS in the community.	4.08% (4)	8.16% (8)	60.20% (59)	27.55% (27)
Q2. The BRICK Avon Academy is proceeding in the right direction.	0.98% (1)	6.68% (7)	58.82% (60)	33.33% (34)
Q4. The BRICK Avon Academy should provide educational program that are comparable to NPS of the same economic ability, size and student characteristics.	3.06% (3)	2.04% (2)	61.22% (60)	33.67% (33)
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Q14. The efforts of the BRICK Avon Academy to educate low income minority students in the county?	24.49% (24)	46.94% (46)	22.45% (22)	6.12% (6)
Q17. How would you rate the overall quality of the BRICK Avon Academy?	27.47% (25)	51.65% (47)	19.78% (18)	1.10% (1)

Note. Source: Zha et al., 2011.

Table B7*Quality of Instruction*

N=102	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q3. The BRICK Avon Academy's curriculum, instruction, and learning materials are most appropriate.	2.02% (2)	8.08% (8)	55.56% (55)	34.34% (34)
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Q9. The instructional effectiveness of the BRICK Avon Academy?	22.68% (22)	59.79% (58)	15.46% (15)	2.06% (2)
Q15. How would you rate the academic programs provided to your child/children currently by the BRICK Avon Academy?	31.52% (29)	48.91% (45)	17.39% (16)	2.17% (2)
Q16. How would you rate the delivery of extra-curricular programs by the BRICK Avon Academy, such as sports, music programs, and clubs?	29.21% (26)	44.94% (40)	21.35% (19)	4.49% (4)

Note. Source: Zha et al., 2011. N=102

Table B8*School Climate. N=102*

N=102	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q7. Students scores on standardized tests should be use to judge how well the BRICK Avon Academy is doing their jobs.	4.04% (4)	11.11% (11)	52.53% (52)	32.32% (32)
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Q10. How about the school buildings and facilities in the BRICK Avon Academy?	21.57% (22)	50.00% (51)	22.55% (23)	5.88% (6)
Q11. The safety and security of the BRICK Avon Academy?	32.32% (32)	47.47% (47)	16.16% (16)	4.04% (4)

Note. Source: Zha et al., 2011.

Table B9*Parent Involvement and Communication. N=102*

N=102	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q5. Parents and teachers think of each other as parents in educating children.	3.03% (3)	4.04% (4)	52.53% (52)	40.40% (40)
Q6. Teachers and staffs at BRICK Avon Academy work hard to build trusting relationships with parents and community numbers.	3.00% (3)	6.00% (6)	48.00% (48)	43.00% (43)
Q8. To what extent do you agree that the community should be willing to sacrifice or compromise on other programs and services to accomplish the BRICK Avon Academy.	2.13% (2)	4.26% (4)	56.38% (53)	37.23% (35)
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Q12. The effectiveness of the BRICK Avon Academy at communicating with the parents.	28.43% (29)	48.04% (49)	18.63% (19)	4.90% (5)
Q13. The effectiveness of the BRICK Avon Academy at communicating with the community.	26.32% (25)	46.32% (44)	24.21% (23)	3.16% (3)

Note. Source: Zha et al., 2011.

Document B1

Memorandum of understanding for comprehensive collaboration between Building Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids and Newark Public School District. Drafted July 2010, signed March 2011

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This Memorandum of Understanding, “hereinafter” MOU, is made and entered into as of July 1, 2010 by and between Building Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids a New Jersey non-profit organization, “hereinafter” BRICK, and Newark Public Schools, “hereinafter” NPS, a school district organized and existing under the laws of the State of New Jersey. BRICK and NPS agree to the terms set forth below and in the appendices and exhibits, attached hereto, and incorporated herein.

Witnesseth:

Whereas, under State law of New Jersey NPS has control and supervision of the public schools in the school district and is charged with the duty to provide quality public education;

Whereas, BRICK is a New Jersey non-profit organization having received non-profit status under Internal Revenue Code Section 501 (c)(3), designed as a medium for partnering with NPS and other stakeholders to address public education improvement in historically underserved areas;

Whereas, NPS has been working arduously toward its goal to develop productive citizens who are “distinguished in all aspects of academic endeavors and willing to challenge the status quo in our society”;

Whereas, BRICK and NPS desire to create an educational program for the children of Newark that will utilize the educational services provided by BRICK and that will be based on trust, mutual respect, common educational objectives and clear accountability;

Whereas, BRICK and NPS commit to create a school that is ranked as an International Knowledge School;

Whereas, it is the intent of both BRICK and NPS to comply fully with applicable Federal and State law and regulations in implementing this MOU;

Whereas, BRICK and NPS expressly acknowledge and agree that NPS retains full authority over such school(s) as set out further herein;

Whereas, BRICK and NPS understand that NPS schools operated under this MOU by BRICK (“BRICK School(s)”) are ultimately subject to NPS authority and BRICK is accountable to NPS in the performance of BRICK’s obligations under this MOU; and

Whereas, BRICK emerged out of a collaborative effort to create a new model for delivery of NPS educational services in Newark, to improve schools and school communities, develop best practices and share them throughout the District;

Now Therefore, in consideration of the promises and mutual covenants and agreements herein set forth, BRICK and NPS do hereby agree as follows:

Article 1

Relationship and Authority

1.1 Contractual Relationship. BRICK and NPS hereby acknowledge and agree that NPS is charged under State law with the duty to administer the provision of public education services with NPS's jurisdiction and has authority to supervise all matters pertaining to the public schools. BRICK and NPS acknowledge and agree that NPS will retain all such authority under this MOU. Due to the unique nature of this MOU and the desire of the Parties to explore an alternative means of providing education to the students of the district, BRICK School(s) shall be subject to the oversight of NPS and shall be accountable to NPS, which oversight and accountability shall be exercised by and through NPS.

1.2 Intent. The intent of this MOU is to create a collaboration between BRICK and NPS to allow BRICK the maximum freedom and autonomy permissible by law, NPS policies, and applicable collective bargaining agreements, along with strong and clear accountability, in order to best serve the students and communities of NPS and to develop new best practices that can be implemented in other areas of NPS. This MOU is intended to set out the framework for this collaborative effort. The Parties recognize that this collaboration and MOU will evolve, be subject to amendment in writing and shall be implemented in a manner to allow the greatest likelihood of success over time.

1.3 Authority. BRICK, in performing its duties and fulfilling its obligations under this MOU, shall have power and authority, consistent with Federal and State law and subject to the other terms and condition of this MOU and the oversight of NPS, to take such actions as may be necessary or desirable to properly and efficiently implement education services at the BRICK School(s) in cooperation with NPS. Should NPS reasonably determine that, for any reason, the health or safety of any student or students at the BRICK School(s) is jeopardized, NPS shall notify BRICK in writing and BRICK shall take all actions necessary to immediately resolve all issues, events, or items threatening the health or safety of any student or students. If, in NPS's sole reasonable discretion, NPS determines that BRICK failed to timely or adequately remedy any such health or safety issue, event, or item, NPS may take action to resolve the matter and exercise any remedy it may have under this MOU including, without limitation, termination of this MOU if necessary to assure the health and safety of students.

1.4 Collective Bargaining Agreements. Notwithstanding any other provision of this MOU, BRICK and NPS agree and represent that BRICK and NPS shall honor all applicable collective bargaining agreements, as they may be negotiated and modified from time to time, to meet the needs of BRICK in creating and sustaining this new model of educational services, for the term of this MOU and any renewals of this MOU. BRICK

and NPS commit to collaborate with employee groups to fulfill the intent of this MOU and maximize its benefit to students and communities.

1.5 Process and Procedures. The Parties acknowledge and agree that they will develop a mutually agreed upon Process and Procedures Manual that will set out in more detail how BRICK and NPS will conduct the shared efforts at BRICK School(s). The Process and Procedures Manual will be agreed to in writing and appended to this MOU and incorporated herein. As the Process and Procedures Manual will be an operational document, NPS Superintendent, or her or his designee, shall have authority with BRICK's agreement to create, agree to, and amend it from time to time as appropriate.

1.6 Interpretation and Precedence. This MOU, the Exhibits attached hereto, and the Process and Procedures Manual are to be interpreted so that all of the provisions are given as full effect as possible. In the event of a conflict between these documents, both Parties will mutually decide which document takes precedence.

1.7 Nonexclusivity. NPS shall not be required to contract for any services from BRICK except for the services expressly provided in this MOU or as otherwise necessary to effectuate the intent and advance the goals of this MOU if agreed to in writing. BRICK acknowledges and agrees that this MOU shall not create any exclusivity and this MOU shall not restrict or prevent NPS from exploring, requesting, or obtaining information, proposals, models, technology, bids or other documents, services and products from any third party or developing such internally, regardless of whether such are similar, identical or in addition to that provided by BRICK under this MOU or outside of the scope and intent of this MOU.

1.8 Waiver of NPS Rules, Bulletins, Reference Guides, Memoranda, and other Policies. It is the intent of NPS to provide BRICK the maximum flexibility allowed by law to implement the education services described in this MOU. To that end, BRICK and NPS agree that some NPS Rules, Bulletins, Reference Guides, and other NPS policies that are not explicitly made applicable to BRICK and/or BRICK School(s) in this MOU or necessary for compliance with law or applicable collective bargaining agreements are hereby waived for BRICK and BRICK School(s). Notwithstanding the foregoing sentence, BRICK and NPS recognize the need for smooth transition and continuity, especially during the first year of the collaboration. The Parties, therefore, recognize that BRICK School(s) may continue to operate using District policies that have been waived under section 1.8. Notwithstanding the above NPS employees working at BRICK School(s) shall continue to comply with NPS ethics and conflict of interest policies. NPS may adopt a policy specifically for schools participating in reform efforts led by the Office of Innovation and Change. BRICK School(s) shall comply with the provision of such a policy, as it may be amended from time to time, that are consistent with terms and intent of this MOU.

Article 2

Term and Renewal

2.1 Term. The term of this MOU shall commence on the date first above written and shall run for five (5) consecutive school years, ending on June 30, 2015, the end of the fifth school year, unless terminated earlier or extended in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth herein. The term shall include five school years beginning in the 2010–2011 school year. Notice of termination of this MOU shall be in writing and be delivered to the non-terminating party identified on the signature page, or designee, by May 1 of the school year in which the MOU is terminated.

2.2 Renewal. So long as BRICK is in good standing under this MOU, either party shall have the option to request the extension of the term of this MOU for an additional period up to five (5) years after the Expiration Date. The process for submitting the renewal request shall be set forth in the Process and Procedures Manual.

2.3 Renewal Criteria. BRICK and NPS agree that both Parties will determine the criteria for renewal of this MOU, based on BRICK's performance under this MOU. BRICK and NPS will use a variety of tools; including, but not limited to the metrics identified in section 4.7 to evaluate BRICK's performance.

Article 3

Partnership School(s)

3.1 BRICK School(s). Commencing immediately upon Superintendent approval of this MOU, BRICK shall provide planning and coordination for the school year commencing July 1, 2010, and thereafter perform all functions contemplated by this MOU at each school listed below and such other schools as the Parties may from time to time agree upon. Prior to July 1, 2010, BRICK shall not have authority to direct the work of NPS school site personnel. Upon mutual agreement, BRICK and NPS may, modify the list of BRICK School(s) to remove one or more NPS school from the list of BRICK School(s) or add one or more NPS schools to the list of BRICK School(s) pursuant to a process set forth in the Processes and Procedures Manual. The initial BRICK School(s) are:

School Name:	Address:	School Code	Grade Level	Enrollment Capacity
Avon Avenue 80	Avon Avenue	051	K–8	800

3.2 Attendance Boundaries. During the term of this MOU, NPS shall, in collaboration with BRICK, continue to establish the attendance boundaries for BRICK School(s). NPS shall give BRICK reasonable advance written notice of, and adequate opportunity to provide input on, any proposed attendance boundary modification. NPS shall consult with BRICK before modifying an attendance boundary that it reasonably believes may have a material impact on any BRICK School to discuss the impact of the

boundary change and whether the boundary change should be implemented. BRICK may from time to time propose boundary adjustments to NPS for collaborative consideration and implementation. NPS will provide BRICK full access to all relevant demographic information.

3.3 Maximum Enrollment Capacity. During the term of this MOU, NPS shall, in collaboration with BRICK, continue to establish the enrollment capacity for the BRICK School(s). NPS shall give BRICK reasonable advanced written notice of, and adequate opportunity to provide input on, any enrollment capacity modification. NPS shall consult with BRICK before modifying the enrollment capacity for any BRICK School(s) to discuss the impact of the enrollment capacity change and whether that change should be implemented.

3.4 Admission and Recruitment. BRICK and NPS agree that, during the term of this MOU and any renewals thereof, each BRICK School will enroll and admit students residing in their respective attendance boundaries. Admission to each BRICK School shall be open to all students residing in the appropriate attendance boundaries on a nondiscriminatory basis and BRICK and BRICK Schools shall take all action necessary to accommodate all such students. If after resident students have been enrolled and admitted, a BRICK School has available seats, BRICK and BRICK Schools may conduct an open enrollment process or use NPS permit process to fill the remaining seats. BRICK and NPS shall be jointly responsible for the recruitment of students for the BRICK School(s). BRICK shall administer the recruitment process. Any costs related to transporting students from a BRICK School's attendance area to another school in the NPS, shall not be allocated to the BRICK School or otherwise charged to BRICK.

3.5 Enrollment and Admission during the School Year. Each BRICK School shall enroll and admit students residing in its attendance boundary throughout each school year during the term of this MOU as long as the operational capacity for the BRICK School exceeds the number of enrolled students. A student shall not be denied admission to a BRICK School on the basis of the student's grade level if the BRICK School serves the student's grade level and the BRICK School has available seats.

3.6 Student Transfers and Removals. Any student transfer or removal out of a BRICK School shall be governed by applicable NPS policies and rules. NPS shall not unreasonably withhold permission for any student to transfer into a BRICK School.

3.7 Non-Discrimination. BRICK shall not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, religion, sex, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability in enrollment admission, or discipline of students or operation of its program.

3.8 Access to BRICK School(s). BRICK recognizes and agrees that BRICK School(s) continue to be schools of NPS during the term of this MOU and, as a result, NPS may, following registration or check-in at the BRICK School administrative office, enter to inspect or observe any BRICK School at any time without prior notice to BRICK.

with the understanding that such inspection or observation will not cause undue disruption of school or BRICK operations.

Article 4

School Design

4.1 School Operations. BRICK shall, working with the staff, community, and NPS at each BRICK School, develop for each BRICK School a complete educational program based on BRICK's school design, comprehensive academic programs, and education services principles.

(a) The BRICK School Design. The BRICK School Design shall provide a program of instruction that serves all students at BRICK School(s) including without limitation, students with special needs. The BRICK School Design shall, among other things: (a) be research based; (b) include curriculum that addresses mathematics, literacy, science, art, music, world language, social studies, physical education and the use of education, assistive technology and transition services; (c) be consistent with New Jersey Department of Education's standards regarding the particular course of study and curriculum; (d) provide the services as specified in the student's IEP; and (e) provide supplemental assistance, including individual academic tutoring, psychological counseling, and health services. BRICK shall provide a reasonably detailed written description of the BRICK School Design. BRICK shall notify NPS in writing of any material modification of the BRICK School Design by March 15th of the school year before the school year in which modification will be implemented.

(b) International Baccalaureate. BRICK will start the International Baccalaureate (IB) application process during the 2011–2012 school year and aims to be authorized as a Primary Years Programme IB World School by 2015. During the 2013–2014 school year, BRICK will begin the IB application process for the Middle Years Programme and aims to be authorized as a Middle Years Programme IB World School by 2017. BRICK and NPS shall cooperate if there needs to be a change with the application dates above.

(c) International Baccalaureate Learner Profile. Teachers assigned to BRICK School(s) will embrace the Learner Profile established by the International Baccalaureate. The aim is to have teachers and students be inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced and reflective.

(d) International Baccalaureate Transdisciplinary Units. Teachers assigned to BRICK School(s) will collaboratively plan transdisciplinary units built around 6 themes that span the year and include: who we are, where we are in place and time, how we express ourselves, how the world works, how we organize ourselves and sharing the planet.

(e) Data Informed Instruction. Instructional staff assigned to BRICK School(s) will use multiple forms of formative and summative assessments to track student achievement. Teachers assigned to BRICK School(s) will utilize grade level team meetings to input data, discuss and create individual action plans for students. BRICK will enter assessment data into the NPS designated data system; currently (SchoolNet), in accordance with NPS policies and procedures. In addition to summative assessments, all diagnostics, progress checks and end of year summative assessments are inputted into the BRICK “Mastery Tracker.”

(f) Long Term, Unit and Lesson Planning. In order to ensure consistency across and among grades, teachers assigned to BRICK School(s) are expected to use the following documents to complete all long term, unit and lesson planning: Programme of Inquiry Map, Units of Inquiry PYP Planner, BRICK Learning Plan and BRICK Lesson Planner.

(g) Extended Instructional time. In first year of implementation of the BRICK framework the school day shall not be extended. In year two and subsequent years BRICK and NPS shall work together to extend the instructional time by at least one hour. NPS shall provide an adequate staffing plan to meet this need.

(h) Common Assessments. Teachers assigned to BRICK School(s) will utilize the following assessments to gauge student mastery of grade level material: diagnostics, interim assessments, final exams, summative unit assessments, formative assessments, performance assessments and NJASK (New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge).

(i) Instructional Philosophy. BRICK shall provide NPS an instructional philosophy by the August of each school which will give a detailed overview of the instructional program. The instructional philosophy will be agreed to in writing and appended to this MOU and incorporated herein.

4.2 Special Education and Related Services. BRICK and NPS agree that BRICK will assist NPS in carrying out the responsibility to identify students with special needs and to develop student Individualized Education Plans (“IEPs”) and to determine appropriate placements, as necessary. BRICK will adhere to the provisions of the laws and regulations to assure that all students with disabilities are accorded a free, appropriate public education (“FAPE”). BRICK will also ensure that no student with disabilities otherwise eligible to enroll in a BRICK School(s) will be denied enrollment. BRICK will comply with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and all Office of Civil Rights mandates for students enrolled in a BRICK School. At all times, BRICK may provide supplemental special education and related services to BRICK School students requiring special needs provided that such services comply with the law, are consistent with the relevant IEP, and are consented to by the relevant parent or guardian.

(a) The IEP Process. BRICK will use NPS forms to develop, maintain, and review assessments and IEPs in the format required by the NPS and will enter assessment and IEP data into the NPS designated data system; currently (ENCORE), in accordance with NPS policies and procedures. BRICK will submit to NPS all required reports in a timely manner as necessary to comply with State and Federal and Modified Consent Decree requirements. Decisions regarding eligibility, goals/objectives, program, placement and exit from special education shall be the decision of the IEP team. Team membership shall be in compliance with applicable State and Federal law and shall be decided by BRICK and NPS. Services and placement shall be provided to all eligible BRICK School students in accordance with applicable law.

(b) District's Delivery of Programs and Related Services. District shall provide or contract for the provision of all special education and related services that are contained within or required by the terms of the IEP of any student who is enrolled at the BRICK School. In the event that the IEP team determined that the BRICK School is unable to provide an appropriate placement or services for a student with special needs, the IEP team will convene to discuss placement and service alternatives. BRICK shall work together with NPS to ensure that the appropriate NPS personnel are present for the IEP team meeting.

(c) Special Education Funding. Unless otherwise agreed between the Parties, any funding received from the State and/or Federal government; specifically designated for serving students with special needs, including all applicable Title I funding for each school year throughout the term of this MOU and any funding due during subsequent renewal years, will be assigned to BRICK. General fund and other funding for such programs shall be included in the Per Pupil Funding defined in Article 6 of this MOU.

4.3 Bilingual, ESL, and SEL Education. BRICK shall provide appropriate bilingual, and "English as a second language" ("ESL"), education services to the limited English proficient students in the BRICK School(s) through programs consistent with the requirements of Federal and State law. BRICK shall also provide education services to Standard English Learners ("SEL"). General fund and other funding for such programs shall be included in the Per Pupil Funding herein.

4.4 State and District Curriculum Requirements. BRICK shall implement its educational program in a manner that is consistent with Federal and State law and regulations, including requirements regarding content and subjects of instruction, unless the appropriate Federal or State authorities have waived any such requirement.

4.5 Student Discipline. BRICK shall adopt and adhere to the written policy of NPS that is consistent with State and Federal law and regulations.

4.6 Student Records. For purposes of developing and implementing the BRICK School Design, upon Superintendent approval of this MOU, NPS will provide full access to records and information in its possession pertaining to students at BRICK

School(s) and students residing in the attendance area of a BRICK School attendance area who will be assigned to a BRICK School, or have or will enroll in a BRICK School, to: (1) those NPS employees at BRICK Schools who would in the ordinary course of NPS business have access to such information; and (2) those NPS employees designated in writing by BRICK as having a legitimate educational interest requiring access to such information. Except to the extent expressly waived by Federal and State authorities in writing, the operation of BRICK and the BRICK School(s) shall comply with all NPS policies and regulations, and applicable Federal and State laws, concerning the maintenance and disclosure of student records. BRICK represents and warrants that it shall designate only those BRICK employees that meet the criteria of having a legitimate educational interest for purposes of access to the records of students who have or will be admitted to and enrolled at BRICK School(s) and the matriculating class for schools that feed into BRICK School(s). BRICK understands that NPS will rely upon BRICK's designation of BRICK employees as having a legitimate educational interest and NPS hereby designates those NPS employees designated by BRICK as school officials having a legitimate educational interest solely and exclusively for the limited purpose of access to education records under New Jersey Statutes 18A:36–19. NPS may terminate such access immediately and shall notify BRICK in writing accordingly; provided that in such situation, BRICK and NPS, in good faith, shall collaborate to establish another means of access to educational records, if possible.

4.7 Assessment of Success.

(a) NPS and BRICK shall develop metrics and methods to evaluate the performance of BRICK and each BRICK School. The metrics will include, but are not limited to:

- (1) BRICK quality review conducted by a third party selected by NPS
- (2) Attendance;
- (3) New Jersey State test scores;
- (4) Promotion Rate;
- (5) School Climate; and
- (6) State and Federal metrics such as Adequately Yearly Progress and Academic Performance Index.

(b) Year One of the implementation shall serve as a benchmarking year, and NPS will have the right to conduct a midyear checkpoint of the BRICK School(s). The purpose of the checkpoint is to identify if the BRICK School is at risk of performing worse than the previous school year. The assessment will be based on dashboard data approved by NPS. Dashboard data shall include, but not be limited to, periodic assessments, grades, attendance and overall school satisfaction.

(c) During the first year of this MOU, BRICK and NPS will develop a full accountability system to be included in the Policies and Procedures Manual for BRICK to fully implement into its school(s) no later than the beginning of the 2011–2012 school year. Until both Parties agree on an accountability system, BRICK and its school(s) will implement NPS's accountability system to the extent that this system does

not interfere with the operation of BRICK's school design and programs. To the extent that NPS and BRICK cannot agree upon the accountability system, the Parties will mediate the matter using the alternative dispute resolution set forth in Article 8.1.

(d) In the full accountability system, the Parties anticipate that there will be five levels of accountability for BRICK that will be implemented based on the performance of BRICK and BRICK Schools:

- (1) Recognition;
- (2) Good Standing;
- (3) Probation (no new school can be added);
- (4) Removal of school(s); and
- (5) Non-Renewal or termination of contract.

4.8 Reports to NPS. Information on the performance of each BRICK School and its students shall be provided to NPS in writing at least semi-annually, in June and December. An annual year-end report shall also be produced no later than December 15th following the completion of each academic year in order to provide time for data on previous year's performance to be gathered and analyzed.

4.9 BRICK Advisory Board. BRICK and NPS will cooperate to form an advisory board comprised of representatives from BRICK, BRICK School(s) administrators, and NPS. The Advisory Board will act as the shared decision making body; specifically in the areas of accountability and leadership, between BRICK and NPS under this MOU.

4.10 School Governance Council. Each BRICK School will form a School Governance Council to ensure that the entire school community is committed to and responsible for the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the Educational Plan, School Budget, and Operations, at BRICK School(s). Membership will consist of the principal, and at least one stakeholder from each constituency: NTU representative; instructional staff; non-instructional staff; parents; students; and other members of the immediate community. Membership is voluntary.

Article 5

BRICK and NPS Additional Responsibilities

5.1 BRICK's Responsibilities

(a) **Philanthropic and Other Support.** With the advice and consent of NPS, BRICK shall make reasonable efforts to raise philanthropic contributions of cash or property or in kind donations for the benefit of the BRICK School(s) to pay for the start-up costs identified below ("Philanthropic Funds"). The Philanthropic funds will be donated to BRICK for the uses specified in this MOU and the donors' terms governing the donation.

(b) Maintenance of Corporate Status and Good Standing. BRICK shall at all times maintain itself as a New Jersey non-profit public benefit corporation capable of exercising the functions of BRICK under the laws of the State, shall remain in good standing under the laws of the State, and shall timely make all filings with the office of the New Jersey Economic Development Corporation. BRICK shall provide NPS with copies of the Articles of Incorporation, a Certificate of Incorporation evidencing its incorporation as a non-profit corporation, its Bylaws, and all amendments or modifications thereto. BRICK will be solely responsible for its debts and obligations.

(c) Compliance with Open Meeting Laws. Commencing with Superintendent's approval of the MOU, BRICK shall comply with the applicable open meeting laws. The Advisory Board and School Governance Council at BRICK School(s) shall operate in accordance with, applicable open meeting laws.

(d) Testing. BRICK and the BRICK School(s) shall administer such standardized tests of academic proficiency as required by Federal and State law, and if appropriate, as may be provided by NPS. The BRICK School(s) shall conduct such standardized testing in collaboration with NPS.

5.2 District's Responsibilities.

(a) Human Resources. NPS shall act as BRICK School(s) human resources function and provide human resources, benefits and payroll services as to all NPS employees assigned to or otherwise supporting BRICK or BRICK School(s).

(b) Financial. NPS shall provide BRICK financial services as described in section 6.1–6.5.

(c) Maintenance and Operations. NPS shall be responsible for the cleaning, routine maintenance and operation of the BRICK school facilities.

(d) Capital Repairs and Improvements. NPS shall be responsible for major repairs, capital improvements or replacements, or construction at the BRICK School facilities. NPS shall allocate capital improvement and replacement funds to the BRICK School facilities to the same extent and in the same manner as it does for other NPS schools of similar size, grade level and location and shall undertake capital replacements, improvements, and repairs to the BRICK School facilities during the term of this MOU consistent with NPS's regular budget and capital plans. NPS shall provide all applicable capital improvement plans and policies to BRICK.

(e) Security and Emergency. NPS shall be responsible for providing all security and emergency responses for the BRICK School facilities in the same manner and to the same extent it provides security and emergency responses to other NPS school of similar size, grade levels and location.

(f) **Transportation.** NPS shall be responsible, at its sole cost and expense, for providing all transportation for BRICK School(s). NPS agrees that the transportation services provided to students at BRICK School(s) shall be comparable to that provided to other NPS schools and their students. In addition, due to an extended day the district shall be responsible for any additional transportation cost associated with students with IEP's.

(g) **Food.** For the 2010–2011 school year, NPS shall select and be responsible for a food service provider for the students at BRICK School(s). For subsequent school years and upon agreement of both Parties, BRICK will have the option to be responsible for and select a food service provider for students attending BRICK School(s). BRICK agrees that food services provided to students at BRICK School(s) shall be comparable to that provided to other NPS schools and its students.

(h) **International Baccalaureate implementation cost.** NPS shall assume all cost associated with the implementation of the Primary Years Programme and Middle Years Programme. Cost includes but is not limited to: staff professional development for IB implementation, travel cost, IB implementation fees and IB authorization fees.

Article 6

Financial

6.1 Allocated Funds. BRICK and NPS shall calculate a per pupil allocation (“Per Pupil Funding” or “PPF”) for each student enrolled at BRICK based on the funding procedures to be determined below. NPS shall set aside for use by BRICK the calculated amount for each pupil enrolled at the BRICK, and make this amount available in each school’s site-based budget, over which the school will have authority as to allocation and expenditure consistent with the regulations of the State of New Jersey. This amount shall include all Title I funding attributable to BRICK, including funds generally managed by NPS for school improvement, as well as all grant funding allocable to BRICK. BRICK intends to maximize the amount of PPF going toward the education of students attending BRICK.

The funding methodology for the first year will represent an interim, simplified solution, and will be different than the methodology used for the following year(s) of this MOU; the Parties require additional time to fully develop, test, and agree to the methodology to be used to fund the BRICK School(s) for school year 2011–2012 and beyond. Through the course of the first year, and prior to the second year of operations, the details of the final funding methodology will be determined and agreed to by BRICK and NPS.

In the first year, therefore, revenues for each BRICK School, on a per-pupil calculation basis will be calculated by the School Business Administrator.

6.2 Budgets. Provided that NPS has provided BRICK with all necessary information in a timely manner, BRICK shall provide NPS with an annual projected budget, in reasonable detail, for each BRICK School no later than is reasonable for

incorporation into NPS budget process. The budget shall be based, at least in part, on the per pupil allocation calculated pursuant to section 6.1. NPS acknowledges that such budgets will be based, in part, on information provided by NPS. Thus, to the extent NPS is able to merely estimate financial information for the next year, BRICK's budget will also be an estimate. BRICK shall be entitled to timely and on-going receipt of all budget calculation information as well as actual and projected budget and expenditure information. The budget of BRICK schools will be presented to NPS as part of the budgeting process for NPS as a whole and is subject to approval by NPS. NPS approval will not be unreasonably withheld.

6.3 Expenditures. NPS shall separately account for the PPF BRICK School(s) determined under section 6.1. BRICK School(s) shall have discretion as to expenditures of PPF consistent with the budget established pursuant to Section 6.2 and any adjustments thereto. NPS shall expend PPF in accordance with BRICK's direction and the process articulated in the Process and Procedures Manual. The process for purchasing, accounting, and fund disbursement shall move directly between BRICK School(s) principal(s), and the NPS School Business Administrator. The process shall be jointly developed by BRICK and NPS and included in the Process and Procedures Manual.

6.4 Grant Applications. On behalf of the BRICK School(s) and with the advice and consent of NPS, BRICK shall have the right to apply for and receive grant money on its own or together with NPS, and to retain any such funds for its use consistent with the terms of such grants. NPS agrees to include BRICK School(s) in its grant applications in comparable manner as it would if they were managed by NPS and to allocate any such funds received on behalf of the BRICK School(s) to BRICK (provided the programs to be supported by such grants are consistent with the BRICK School(s)' educational program). NPS agrees that, if necessary, it will act as fiscal agent for any grant funds received on behalf of the BRICK School(s). Any such monies received by BRICK shall not reduce the PPF under the MOU. All grants funds received by BRICK will be used consistent with the educational purposes of such grants. Any such grants or donations shall supplement PPF.

6.5 Additional Programs. If NPS requests BRICK to provide any programs not already offered by NPS at the BRICK School(s) and that is not offered as part of its regular teaching program during the regular school year, such as Pre-K, summer school, and before-school and after-school programs, NPS and BRICK will negotiate the terms and conditions of additional compensation to cover such programs. Any agreements between the Parties concerning such additional programs to be provided by BRICK, whether at the request of NPS or BRICK, shall be in writing and signed by the Parties. BRICK shall not be obligated to provide any program for which it has not received funding. BRICK shall have the option to continue such programs in place at BRICK School(s) as of the date of this MOU at NPS's expense if NPS decides to continue such programs. To the extent that additional programs involve employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement, the additional services/programs must be within the scope of the collective bargaining agreement between NPS and the applicable union. In

addition, NPS/BRICK will be required to negotiate with the applicable union regarding the compensation provided to employees if the issue is not addressed in the collective bargaining agreement.

Article 7 Personnel

7.1 Personnel Responsibilities. NPS shall assign personnel to each BRICK School in accordance with BRICK staffing selection under Article 7.2 below. NPS employees assigned to work at BRICK School(s) or otherwise assisting BRICK shall remain NPS employees and not considered employees of BRICK for any purpose, BRICK employees may also be assigned to and work at the sites of the BRICK School(s). Accordingly, NPS and BRICK employees will remain employees of their respective employers, and not be considered jointly employed by either party. BRICK and NPS agree that BRICK employees working regularly at the BRICK School(s) must be fingerprinted and certified in compliance with the New Jersey 18A:6–7.2 and those employees will be held, at a minimum, to the same standards as NPS employees performing the same or similar work, including the satisfaction of relevant State and Federal legal requirements. In addition, the fingerprinting and certification requirements must be consistent with the CBA between the applicable unions and NPS.

7.2 Selection, Supervision, and Evaluation of Personnel.

(a) Principals and Other School Site Administrators. BRICK and NPS shall collaborate in the selection and assignment of principals and other administrators for each BRICK School(s). In this process, BRICK shall; with the benefit of information provided by NPS and with the approval of NPS, select administrators, unless such selection or assignment violates law, regulation or collective bargaining agreement, NPS shall assign the selected administrators to the positions designated by BRICK. The collaboration shall include, but not be limited to, the description of desirable qualification and leadership qualities, timely sharing of relevant information and personnel files of candidates for positions between BRICK and NPS Superintendent (access limited to BRICK personnel necessary to the selection process), and a selection and assignment process that includes teachers, parents, and other school stakeholders. BRICK and NPS will hold each BRICK School principal accountable for the success of his or her BRICK School.

(b) Teachers and Para–Professional. NPS, in collaboration with BRICK School(s), shall develop a process for selecting teachers and paraprofessionals, and BRICK School principal(s) shall have the authority to select, supervise and evaluate teachers and paraprofessionals at each BRICK School(s) consistent with the terms of the applicable collective bargaining agreement. BRICK shall not be bound to mutual consent in selection teachers and paraprofessionals to work at a BRICK School(s).

(c) Non–Instructional Personnel. NPS, in collaboration with BRICK School(s), shall select school site non–instructional personnel consistent with the terms of

applicable collective bargaining agreements and Civil Service Rules (for NPS employees). BRICK School principals shall have authority to supervise and evaluate school site non-instructional personnel consistent with applicable collective bargaining agreements and Civil Service Commission rules for NPS employees.

7.3 Employee Salaries and Benefits. NPS employees at the BRICK School(s) will be compensated according to the terms of the applicable collective bargaining agreements, Civil Service Commission rules, or other NPS agreements. BRICK and NPS contemplate working together with applicable collective bargaining units and others to create additional compensation practices designed to maximize the success of BRICK Schools. NPS employees working at the BRICK School(s) shall be on the NPS payroll, and NPS shall pay all salaries, stipends and other payments due to the employees, as certified to NPS by BRICK, together with any associated fringe benefits, FICA taxes and withholding taxes or other payroll assessments or deduction. NPS shall indemnify and hold BRICK harmless for any claims, actions or proceedings arising from NPS's obligations set forth in this Section 7.3. BRICK shall pay directly salaries, fringe benefits, and employment taxes for those persons at the BRICK School(s) who are employed directly by BRICK. BRICK may provide stipends, bonuses or other compensation to BRICK and/or NPS employees in furtherance of the intent of this MOU.

7.4 Employment Terms. Notwithstanding any other provision of this MOU, in implementing the BRICK/NPS collaborative in BRICK School(s), BRICK and NPS shall respect the rights and benefits accorded by all applicable collective bargaining agreements and Civil Service Commission rules for NPS employees. Flexibility is one of the essential features of BRICK. Accordingly, BRICK and NPS shall collaborate with employee organizations, to identify any features of the applicable collective bargaining agreements or Civil Service Commission rules that may interfere with the implementation of the BRICK School Design at the BRICK School(s). NPS and BRICK will collaborate with the applicable employee organizations regarding modification of the relevant collective bargaining agreements and/or Civil Service Commission rules in order to maximize the likelihood of success in the BRICK School(s). No provision of this MOU, the attached Exhibits, or the Process and Procedures Manual shall be considered or deemed a modification of any collective bargaining MOU to which NPS is a party.

7.5 Staffing Model. BRICK shall not be bound to a NPS staff floor-plan. BRICK will develop a floor-plan that addresses the needs of BRICK School(s).

7.6 Training. BRICK shall have full authority to create and implement professional development and training in BRICK methods, curriculum, program, and technology methods, curriculum, program, and technology to all BRICK School staff. BRICK and BRICK School(s) shall have the option to utilize any and all training services offered by NPS to NPS schools and to participate in collaborative training, but are not required to do so.

7.7 Collective Bargaining Grievances.

(a) Grievance. All grievances will be handled in a manner consistent with applicable collective bargaining agreement.

(b) Notice of Grievance. BRICK and NPS shall each within 3 school days of learning notify the other in writing in the event of a grievance being filed under any applicable collective bargaining agreement by an NPS employee working at a BRICK School.

(c) BRICK Participation in Resolution. NPS will provide BRICK with an opportunity to participate in the resolution of any grievance and will not resolve any without first providing notice to BRICK and an opportunity to comment on the proposed settlement.

(d) BRICK Participation in Defense. BRICK shall cooperate in the defense of any such grievance and adhere to the formal outcome of all such grievances.

Article 8 Miscellaneous

8.1 Alternate Dispute Resolution. The Parties agree to cooperate in good faith in all actions relating to this MOU, to communicate openly and honestly, and generally to attempt to avoid disputes in connection with this MOU. If, nevertheless, a dispute should arise in connection with this MOU, the Parties agree to use their best efforts to resolve such dispute in a fair and equitable manner and without the need for expensive and time-consuming litigation. Except for cases involving imminent threat to health or safety, any and all disputes between Parties arising out of this MOU shall be resolved in accordance with the alternate dispute resolution procedure that is set forth below. The Parties agree to expedite dispute resolution whenever necessary to effectuate the intent of this MOU.

Neither BRICK nor NPS is required to pursue the process in this section in the event action is necessary to protect student health or safety.

(a) Any controversy or claim arising out of or relating to the MOU, other than as set forth herein, must be put in writing ("Written Notification"). The Written Notification must identify the nature of the dispute and any supporting facts. The Written Notification may be tendered by personal delivery, by facsimile, or by certified mail. The Written Notification shall be deemed received (a) if personally delivered, upon date of delivery to the address of the person to receive such notice if delivered by 5:00 PM or otherwise on the business day following personal delivery; (b) if by facsimile, upon electronic confirmation of receipt; or (c) if by mail, two (2) business days after deposit in the U.S. Mail.

A written response (“Written Response”) shall be tendered to the other party within ten (10) business days from the date of receipt of the Written Notification. The Written Notification shall be deemed received (a) if personally delivered, upon date of delivery to the address of the person to receive such notice if delivered by 5:00 PM or otherwise on the business day following personal delivery; (b) if by facsimile, upon electronic confirmation of receipt; or (c) if by mail, two (2) business days after deposit in the U.S. Mail.

(b) The Parties agree to schedule a conference to discuss the claim or controversy (“Issue Conference”). The Issue Conference shall take place within seven (7) business days from the date the Written Response is received by the other party. If the controversy, claim, or dispute cannot be resolved by mutual agreement at the Issue Conference, then either party may request that the matter be resolved by mediation.

(c) Mediation proceedings shall commence within forty (40) business days from the date of the Issue Conference. The Parties shall mutually agree upon the selection of a mediator to resolve the controversy or claim at dispute. Each party shall bear its own costs and expenses associated with the mediation. The mediator’s fees and the administrative fees of the mediation shall be shared equally among the Parties.

(d) If the Parties do not resolve the matter at mediation, the Parties agree to submit the controversy, claim, or dispute to non-binding arbitration conducted by a mutually agreed upon single arbitrator. The arbitrator must be an active member of the New Jersey State Bar or a retired judge of the State or Federal judiciary of New Jersey. If the Parties cannot agree on an arbitrator within fifteen (15) business days after the termination of mediation, either party may submit the matter to the Newark branch of American Arbitration Association and the matter shall proceed in accordance with the applicable American Arbitration Association rules. The arbitrator’s fees and the administrative fees of the arbitration shall be shared equally among the Parties. Each party shall bear their own costs and expenses.

(e) However, any party who fails or refuses to submit to arbitration shall bear all costs and expenses incurred by such other party in compelling arbitration of any controversy, claim, or dispute.

8.2 Force Majeure. Neither party shall be liable if the performance of any part or all of this contract is prevented, delayed, hindered or otherwise made impracticable or impossible by reason of any strike, flood, riot, fire, explosion, war, act of God, sabotage, accident or any other casualty or cause beyond either party’s control, and which cannot be overcome by reasonable diligence and without unusual expense.

8.3 Entire MOU. This MOU and the Appendices and Exhibits hereto shall constitute the full and complete MOU between the Parties. All prior representations, understandings and agreements are merged herein and are superseded by this MOU.

8.4 Construction and Enforcement. This MOU shall be construed and enforced in accordance with the laws of the State of New Jersey.

8.5 Amendments. This MOU may be altered, amended, changed or modified only by MOU in writing executed by BRICK and a properly authorized representative of NPS.

8.6 Disclaimer. BRICK and NPS agree that all items that are not expressed in this MOU and the Process and Procedures manual will revert to NPS standard policies.

To BRICK at:

Dominique Lee, Board Chair
Building Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids
Post Office Box 995
Newark, NJ 07102

To NPS at:

Dr. Clifford B. Janey, Superintendent
Newark Public Schools
2 Cedar Street
Newark, NJ 07102

with a copy to:

Lisa Pollak, General Counsel
Newark Public Schools
2 Cedar Street
Newark, NJ 07102

In witness whereof, the Parties hereto have executed this MOU as of the day and years above written.

By _____

Dr. Clifford B. Janey, State District Superintendent of Newark Public Schools

By _____

Dominique Lee, Board Chair of Building Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids

By _____

Lisa Pollak esq, General Counsel of Newark Public Schools

Document B2

BRICK School Improvement Application (SIG) 4/2011. Parts: Project Description (Section 6); Student Outcome Targets (Section 7); and Program Activity Description (Section 9).

Form S–6

Use only one model template for each school

Date: April 7, 2011

Page 1 **of** 63

TRANSFORMATION PROJECT DESCRIPTION

LEA : Newark Public Schools
BRICK Avon Academy

Name of School:

Transformation SIG Required Activity – 1 Replace the principal who led the school prior to commencement of the transformation model.		
Implementation Guidance Establish clear criteria that describe the leadership behaviors needed to implement reform. These criteria should guide recruiting, hiring, supporting, and evaluating leaders. LEAs have the flexibility of retaining recently hired Principals who have the experience and skills to successfully implement the SIG model.		
Evidence of Implementation Indicators	Implementation Description	Timeline
1. The LEA identifies behaviors that leaders need to improve instruction and promote necessary school change.	In developing the behaviors that leaders need to improve instruction and promote necessary school change the LEA will utilize school based research including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJ Educator Effectiveness Task Force, March 2011; • ISLLC, 2008 Educational Leadership Policy Standards; • Assessing the Effectiveness of School Leaders: New directions and New Processes. Wallace Foundation, 2009; • Schools Need Good Leaders Now: State Progress in Creating a Learning–Centered School Leadership System, Southern Regional Education Board, 2007; • A Framework for the Assessment of Learning–Centered Leadership, Vanderbilt University, 2007; • New Jersey Department of Education Standards for School Leaders. In particular PERFORMANCE EXPECTATION 2: Teaching and Learning	July 2009

	Education leaders ensure achievement and success of all students by monitoring and continuously improving teaching and learning.	
2. The LEA selects and hires a Principal with the necessary competencies to be a transformation leader.	<p>The school principal at BRICK Avon Academy has been in place for less than a year. In appointing the current principal the LEA ensured that she had the necessary competencies to be a transformation leader.</p> <p>Since her appointment, the Principal has demonstrated that she is an innovative leader and a manager of change who values collaborative leadership and is committed to 21st century learning skills. She has attended the Leadership Academy and has been coached and supported throughout the year.</p> <p>In addition, based on a study conducted by the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy at the University of Washington, BRICK Avon Academy hired a School Operations Manager (SOM). The purpose of this new position was to free the Principal (Instructional Leader) of many of the administrative distractions and allow her to spend more time on instructional matters. The position has proven vital to the turnaround efforts at BRICK Avon Academy and the school looks forward to strengthening the position for the following year by making the SOM an actual administrator, legally responsible for all operations of the school. In essence this model distributes the leadership of the school between an Instructional Leader and a School Operations Manager.</p>	<p>July 2009</p> <p>July 2009 – Present</p> <p>July 2009 – Present</p>
3. The LEA establishes a pipeline of potential turnaround leaders.	<p>The LEA acknowledges that creating a sense of ongoing development and career advancement is an important method for Principals to use to retain their best teachers. This aspect of the school's culture will also help to attract new teachers and build internal and external pipelines of potential leadership team members. These pipelines are enhanced by professional development activities targeted to leadership capacity building, in addition to professional development that all teachers receive.</p> <p>In addition, the LEA will follow the recommendations of the NJ Educator Effectiveness Task Force. In particular the LEA will actively promote and develop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher education pathways among staff; • Professional Learning Communities within and across turnaround schools; • Peer Assistance models; • Teacher internships. 	June 2010 – June 2014

<p>4. The LEA creates the expectation that the principal will develop staff instructional capacity and provide opportunities for sharing authority to guide the learning agenda.</p>	<p>One of the Core Values of BRICK is Team Value: <i>Stakeholders foster an environment where staff members are committed, not compliant, to the mission of educating children. Creating an exceptionally professional, collegial, and stimulating environment where everyone has adequate support, a real voice, and the tools they need to be triumphant is essential to school culture.</i></p> <p>No person alone can right the ship of a persistently failing school. The BRICK framework fosters an environment where everyone is a leader. To do this, BRICK Avon Academy will form a School Governance Council to ensure that the entire school community is committed to and responsible for the planning, implementation and monitoring of the Educational Plan, School Budget and Operations. Membership will consist of the principal, and at least one stakeholder from each constituency: BRICK, NTU representative; instructional staff; non-instructional staff; parents; students (6–8); and other members of the immediate community.</p> <p>In addition, there will be an Instructional Cabinet that will consist of the Instructional Leader, Vice Principals, Grade Level Leaders, Department Chairs, Coaches, Response to Intervention Coordinator, Guidance Counselor and Social Worker. The Instructional Cabinet will meet bi-weekly to discuss teacher progress, student progress, intervention planning, and resource allocation for Tier II and Tier III interventions and tracking. Outcomes of these meetings will be fed back to the entire community through meeting a soft copy of meeting notes and discussion at grade level team meetings.</p> <p>Within this context the Executive Director and Founder of BRICK works alongside the Principal providing strategic leadership and direction to the school. This includes developing and promoting staff institutional capacity and providing opportunities for teacher leaders to share the authority for guiding the learning agenda.</p> <p>Within Grades K–5 the school has established Grade Level Leaders (GLL) <i>In order to ensure alignment between and among grade levels, each grade has a designated “Grade Level Leader.” The GLL serves as head of his/her Grade Level Team (GLT). Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as lead facilitator at common planning times and other grade level meetings; 	<p>June 2010 – June 2014</p> <p>June 2010 – June 2014</p> <p>June 2010 – June 2014</p> <p>June 2010 – June 2014</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meet with Vertical Team (other GLLs) to establish transparency and coherence among grade levels;• Act as ambassador for grade level;• Meet regularly with leadership team to share information regarding grade level and gather new information to pass on to team;• Coordinate paperwork for GLT (data, assessments, etc.);• Gather instructional resources for GLT based on discussions, observations and data. <p>In Grades 6–8 the school has established a Department Team Structure with the four Department Leaders: Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Humanities serving as the Instructional Leaders.</p>	
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Transformation SIG Required Activity – 2

Use rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation systems for teachers and principals that (a) take into account data on student growth as a significant factor, as well as other factors, such as multiple observation-based assessments of performance and ongoing collections of professional practice reflective of student achievement and increased high school graduation rates; and (b) are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement.

Implementation Guidance

Although we expect an LEA that receives SIG funds and decides to implement the transformation model in a Tier I or Tier II school to implement that model beginning in the 2010–2011 school year, we recognize that certain components of the model may need to be implemented later in the process. For example, because an LEA must design and develop a rigorous, transparent, and equitable staff evaluation system with the involvement of teachers and principals, implement that system, and then provide staff with ample opportunities to improve their practices, the LEA may not be able to remove staff members who have not improved their professional practices until later in the implementation process.

Evidence of Implementation Indicators	Implementation Description	Timeline
<p>1. The SEA and/or LEA establish a transparent system of procedures and protocols for evaluating staff growth.</p>	<p>The LEA has established transparent systems of procedures and protocols for evaluating staff. These are set out in <i>Achievement Through Teaching Excellence Teacher Evaluation and Performance Assessment Overview</i> Newark Public Schools' evaluation system.</p> <p>This utilizes Charlotte Danielson's A Framework for Teaching and places emphasis on Four Domains and Accompanying Components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Preparation; • Classroom Environment; • Professional Responsibilities; • Instruction. <p>During year one of the SIG grant, the LEA in partnership with BRICK and NTU will design and develop procedures and protocols for evaluating staff that are teaching in turnaround schools. These will be implemented during year two.</p>	<p>June 2010 – June 2014</p> <p>September 2011 – June 2012</p>
<p>2. The LEA evaluates teacher and administrator skills and knowledge, using a variety of valid and reliable tools that can be used to guide PD, teacher support, and personnel decisions.</p>	<p>In light of the recommendations of the NJ Educator Effectiveness Task Force, March 2011, and the Gates Measures of Effective Teaching Project, the LEA will use a range of additional tools including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ISLLC, 2008 Educational Leadership Policy Standards as the main criteria for evaluating administrators; • Charlotte Danielson's A Framework for Teaching; • Effective Classroom Observation (ECO); • Peer Assistance and Reviewers (PAR); • IMPACT – District of Columbia Public Schools; 	<p>September 2011 – June 2014</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master teachers; • Student classroom surveys, Teacher Surveys and Parent surveys. 	
3. The SEA and LEA document and provide training regarding the evaluation process.	<p>In the <i>Achievement Through Teaching Excellence Teacher Evaluation and Performance Assessment Overview</i> Newark Public Schools provides a detailed framework for the evaluation process and procedures.</p> <p>In designing and providing relevant training the LEA will utilize the findings of the Gates funded pilots in locations such as New York City, Memphis, Pittsburg and Tampa. This highlighted the need for continuous professional development in the areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-conferencing; • Effective classroom observation; • Scrutiny of student's work; • Post-conferencing; • Providing constructive feedback, based on strengths and areas for development. 	September 2011 – June 2014
4. The SEA and LEA periodically assess the quality and usefulness of the evaluation process.	<p>In order to assess the effectiveness of the evaluation process the LEA will establish a regular pattern of monitoring, evaluation, review and revision. During any given year this will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site visits by LEA personnel and external education experts to shadow the evaluation process in a school. • Review of the evaluation cycle in a school. 	September 2011 – June 2014
5. The LEA monitors the evaluation process and reviews results.	<p>The LEA will institute a cycle of monitoring, evaluation, reviews and revision.</p> <p>This cycle will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On site visits; • Desktop analysis of the evaluation rating, including inter-reviewer reliability; • Student data analysis to match student growth against teacher evaluation ratings; • Stakeholder surveys; • A meta-analysis of findings; • Report and recommendations for modifications and changes to the evaluation process. 	September 2011 – June 2014

Transformation SIG Required Activity – 3 Identify and reward school leaders, teachers, and other staff who, in implementing this model, have increased student achievement and high school graduation rates, and identify and remove those who have not improved their professional practice after having been afforded ample opportunity to do so.		
Implementation Guidance The LEA may develop a performance–based incentive system.		
Evidence of Implementation Indicators	Implementation Description	Timeline
1. The SEA and/or LEA develop a valid, fair, and transparent method for deciding whether performance–based incentives have been met.	<p>The mechanism for deciding on whether performance–based incentives have been met will be fair and transparent.</p> <p>Building on best practice research from around the world it is envisaged that the incentives will be measured against a set of “tiered” Key Performance Objectives, each of which will have clear success criteria.</p>	September 2011 – June 2014
2. A performance–based incentive system is developed in partnership with teachers, teachers’ unions, and other relevant stakeholders.	<p>School transformation requires that those who are successful in facilitating growth in student achievement be identified and rewarded. In discussion with the Newark Teacher’s Union incentives will be developed to recruit and retain teachers, including performance–based incentives. These cannot be based purely on test scores. A system of value added needs to be developed – need to judge student progress in relation to the point each student is starting from.</p> <p>Teachers will receive additional pay for participating in the extended learning hours for programs for all students. In the case of teachers this is to the order of \$50 per hour.</p> <p>The school will offer the opportunity for teachers to obtain National Board Certification. In addition, teachers have the option to attain graduate level university coursework at the expense of the district.</p> <p>Additional incentives at BRICK Avon Academy will include, as appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated Parking spaces; • Leaving early on Friday; • Certificates; • Recognition at staff, community meetings, 	<p>September 2011 – June 2012</p> <p>September 2011 – June 2014</p> <p>September 2011 – June 2014</p> <p>September 2011 – June 2014</p>

	<p>during assemblies and morning announcements;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole school incentives for meeting student achievement targets; • Individual incentives for grade level teams and/or curriculum area teams meeting student achievement targets; • Whole school incentives for meeting professional practice targets; • Individual incentives for grade level teams and/or curriculum area teams meeting professional practice targets. 	
3. The SEA and LEA develop policies that facilitate performance-based dismissals.	<p>The LEA policies will take into account the recommendations made in the influential Performance-Based Dismissals, a 2009 report by the Center on Innovation & Improvement.</p> <p>These recommendations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing greater flexibility and support for leaders in turnaround schools including negotiating expedited processes for performance-based dismissals in turnaround schools; • Enabling greater flexibility over class sizes and classroom assignments; • Prioritizing recruitment, hiring, and placement for turnaround schools; and assembling teams to assist principals with dismissal procedures. 	September 2011 – June 2014
4. LEA hiring procedures and budget timelines support the recruitment and hiring of high-quality teachers.	<p>NPS has already identified and advertised a range of posts, subject to budget confirmation which will enable the school to transform its faculty. These posts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers; • Literacy Coach; • Math Coach; • Reading Specialist; • Behavioral Specialist; • Student Support Specialist; • Social Worker; • Career and workforce Development; • Community Relations; • School Counselor; • READ 180 coordinator. 	September 2011 – June 2012

	<p>week-long induction in their placement city.</p> <p>BRICK plans in the near future to partner with at least two other local University programs that will supply a pipeline of qualified individuals to work at BRICK Avon Academy.</p>										
<p>5. LEAs and schools provide targeted assistance to underperforming teachers.</p>	<p>The Newark Public Schools <i>Achievement Through Teaching Excellence Teacher Evaluation and Performance Assessment Overview</i> is premised on the basis of empowering effective teachers. However, NPS recognizes that not all teachers are equally effective.</p> <p>The LEA and school will implement an early warning system as part of the performance evaluation process. Such that if at any stage in the process an individual teacher is identified as underperforming they can be provided with targeted support and assistance in a timely manner.</p> <p>In order to support this process, NPS has recognized three Tiers:</p> <table> <tr> <td>TIER I</td><td>TIER II</td><td>TIER III</td></tr> <tr> <td>No</td><td>Minimal</td><td>Partial</td></tr> <tr> <td>Demonstration</td><td>Demonstration</td><td>Demonstration</td></tr> </table> <p>There are clear procedures in place for any teacher who received an unsatisfactory annual evaluation the previous year, including the school administrator placing the teacher in the Teacher Assistance Program (TAP).</p> <p>In addition to in school and district support, the LEA and the school will also provide access to support and training from outside educational consultants who specialize in supporting and enabling underperforming teachers to grow.</p>	TIER I	TIER II	TIER III	No	Minimal	Partial	Demonstration	Demonstration	Demonstration	<p>September 2011 – June 2014</p>
TIER I	TIER II	TIER III									
No	Minimal	Partial									
Demonstration	Demonstration	Demonstration									

Transformation SIG Required Activity – 4

Provide staff ongoing, high-quality, job-embedded professional development (PD) that is aligned with the school's comprehensive instructional program and designed with school staff to ensure they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and have the capacity to successfully implement school reform strategies.

Implementation Guidance

Effective PD: (1) occurs on a regular basis (e.g., daily or weekly); (2) is aligned with academic standards, school curricula, and school improvement goals; (3) involves educators working together collaboratively, and is often facilitated by school instructional leaders, school-based PD coaches, or mentors; (4) requires active engagement rather than passive learning by participants; and (5) focuses on understanding what and how students are learning, and how to address students' learning needs (e.g., reviewing student work and achievement data; collaboratively planning, testing, and adjusting instructional strategies, formative assessments, and materials based on such data).

Evidence of Implementation Indicators	Implementation Description	Timeline
1. The LEA and school provide PD that is differentiated based on teacher experience and expertise, and student data. Professional development does not interfere with the classroom schedule.	Professional development at BRICK Avon Academy is seen as a problem-solving tool. If we want to improve student achievement, we must provide teachers with the knowledge and skills that they need to effectively teach the students. Prior to year one of the SIG grant the LEA and BRICK will choose a strategic partner to provide embedded professional development for the entire staff of BRICK Avon Academy.	May 2010 – June 2010
	A component of the mission of BRICK is to provide individualized professional development to teachers. In planning effective job-embedded PD for the staff the LEA and BRICK will adopt a similar approach used when planning lessons – backwards design that encourages BRICK to consider what BRICK wants our outcomes to be first (and from there work backwards to choose the appropriate PD). Ultimately the LEA and BRICK want to meet the needs of the students and therefore they need to focus on the results needed to achieve in order to improve the students experience of school. PD should be job-embedded in that it should enable those involved to reflect, implement, and reflect on the implementation. To be fully effective, all learning from the PD should always be connected back to student learning and achievement and the development of teacher skills – retaining good teachers.	September 2011 – June 2014 September 2011 – June 2014
	In order to improve student achievement, BRICK must provide teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to teach the students. The same can also be said for improving the quality of the school's leadership, regardless of whether this is strategic or instructional	September 2011 – June 2014

	<p>leadership. Therefore as well as job–embedded PD for teachers, BRICK will provide PD to meet the needs of the leadership team. Administrators cannot lead schools to make drastic and dramatic gains on their own.</p> <p>To execute part of our mission of providing individual professional development for our teachers NPS, BRICK and BRICK Avon Academy will need to support and measure the instructional changes of each teacher. To provide a scope and sequence for recording and tracking the progress of teachers, the school will use a map similar to the Teaching As Leadership (TAL) Framework. This concept will help to ensure coaches (Instructional leaders) provide concrete strategies to teachers around how to refine and improve all aspects of their practice.</p> <p>The TAL Framework provides six principles of leadership and twenty–eight key teacher actions that have been proven to drive student achievement. For example, one the principles of leadership is to Plan Purposefully and teacher actions within this category are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop high quality assessments • Create Long–term and unit plans (backwards design) • Lesson plan • Differentiate • Develop behavioral management plans • Design classroom procedures and systems. <p>The framework will be used by coaches (Instructional Leaders) and PD providers and tracked through a school mastery tracker (excel document).</p> <p>A framework like TAL will provide instructional leaders the ability to give clear–targeted advice to teachers to help them to link back to the school’s mission to Build Responsible Intelligent and Creative Kids.</p> <p><u>Planning and Preparation:</u></p> <p>Part of the BRICK model is to provide all teachers with extensive planning and preparation time. As a result, the following will be provided for all teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A three–week summer teacher institute to prepare for the school year. At the institute teachers will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Be trained on school wide data systems; 	<p>September 2011 – June 2014</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Map power standards; ○ Trained on the school wide discipline policy; ○ Trained on the school RTI model; ○ Time to plan unit plans; ○ Create in-house benchmarks. ○ Time to develop their classroom spaces and other areas of the school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 hours (180 minutes) per week to Grade Level Team collaborative planning time. • All teachers have one 45-minute periods a week designated as “preparation periods.” • One extended day (3/hrs) each month after school for professional development time. <p>BRICK believes that teachers need time during the school day to work with colleagues, and also to complete personal work to alleviate the amount of work they are taking home.</p> <p>The one preparation periods each week can be utilized in a number of ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing PD without interfering with the classroom schedule; • Preparing for future lessons or units; • Evaluating student work; • Observing colleagues to develop personal teaching practice; • Meeting with coaches, administrators, etc. to reflect on teaching practice. 	
2. The LEA and school provide PD that equips teachers with the competencies needed to apply evidence- and standards-based practices effectively.	<p>At BRICK Avon Academy, our teachers are the greatest influence in the success of our students.</p> <p>To that end, BRICK Avon Academy teachers are trained to utilize a disciplined Instructional Cycle that consists of planning, implementing and reflecting. Planning starts by identifying what essential skills and knowledge students must master.</p> <p>Teachers then determine appropriate assessments and the most effective method of instruction to ensure student mastery. During implementation, teachers commit to following established plans and collecting both formative and summative data from students. . This needs to be meaningful – purpose of assessment is to allow students to demonstrate progress.</p> <p>Teachers then reflect on the effectiveness of the instruction based on both formative and summative assessment data and adjust future planning, including</p>	September 2011 – June 2014

	<p>personal professional development.</p> <p>In order to implement this approach with rigor, the school equips all staff with the competencies required to apply evidence and standard based practices effectively. This includes ensuring that all teachers receive research-based professional development. In addition, teachers will receive ongoing support in developing and implementing the curriculum and ensuring students overcome obstacles and achieve their maximum potential.</p>	
3. The LEA and school define high levels of implementation of practices and monitor changes in teacher practice and student outcomes.	<p>The LEA, BRICK and the school will monitor and evaluate the levels of implementation of practices based on a range of measures including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective Classroom Observation; • Scrutiny of student work; • Teacher progress tracker (TAL) • Overall school data and class data; • Videotaped lessons; • Peer Assessment and Review. <p>The level of implementation will be measured against a range of consistent standards including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Framework for Teaching; • Teaching As Leadership framework; • Implementation of the common core; • Ongoing Data Analysis. 	September 2011 – June 2014
4. The LEA and school promote professional learning communities and a school culture of continuous learning.	<p>The LEA, BRICK and BRICK Avon Academy commit to providing 3 hours (180 minutes) per week to Grade Level Team collaborative planning time, which operate as professional learning communities. The planning time could be used in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning future transdisciplinary units (International Baccalaureate Units); • Planning units outside the Program of Inquiry; • Assessing student work; • Inputting and analyzing student data; • Observing teachers on different grade levels; • Engaging in professional development – and sharing good teaching practices. <p>The following people, depending on the area of focus, could facilitate common planning time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade level teachers; • Grade Level Leaders; • Department leaders; • Literacy and/or math coach; • Administrators; 	September 2011 – June 2014

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside professional development organization. 	
<p>5. The LEA has a system to evaluate PD providers and select only those providers considered to be of high quality. The LEA provides approval oversight to PD providers selected by the school.</p>	<p>The LEA will issue a series of RFPs specifically linked to the SIG funds. The application will be vetted against agreed criteria and providers will be held accountable for the effective implementation of CPD and in particular its impact on the professional growth of all staff and student achievement.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the CPD providers will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ research-based strategies that provide an immediate and dramatic turnaround in student achievement; • Recommend which existing programs are to be continued and which programs are to be eliminated; • Provide a coaching model to help teachers enhance their instruction; • Advance math teachers' content and instruction knowledge of mathematics; • Increase the capacity of all staff members in how to use technology to improve instruction; • Provide comprehensive, coherent, manageable and integrated instructional and support programs; • Promote student motivation for learning; • Provide formative and ongoing reports on program effectiveness to include, but not limited to, student achievement, parental involvement, student attendance, and student discipline. <p>PD providers will operate within a certain framework when coaching teachers. For example, PD providers will help facilitate a grade level team meeting and help the team plan. The PD provider would then observe each teacher teach the lesson along with his or her grade level colleagues. (plan – implement– review model)</p> <p>All of the PD providers will align their work with the schools' priorities by meeting with the instructional team to ensure that there are not duplicate efforts but that they do in fact provide targeted coaching and support as and when it is needed.</p>	<p>May 2010 – June 2010</p>

Transformation SIG Permissible Activity: A transformation model may also implement other strategies.		
Implementation Guidance An LEA may also implement other strategies to develop teachers' and school leaders' effectiveness, such as— <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Providing additional compensation to attract and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in a transformation school; Instituting a system for measuring changes in instructional practices resulting from professional development; or Ensuring that the school is not required to accept a teacher without the mutual consent of the teacher and principal, regardless of the teacher's seniority. 		
Evidence of Implementation Indicators	Implementation Description	Timeline
Instituting a system for measuring changes in instructional practices resulting from professional development	<p>The school will monitor and evaluate the levels of implementation of practices based on a range of measures including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective Classroom Observation; Scrutiny of student work; One-On-One conversations with leadership; Teacher progress tracker (TAL); School wide data; Purposeful walkthroughs ; Peer Assessment and Review. <p>The level of implementation will be measured against a range of consistent standards including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Framework for Teaching; Implementation of the common core; Ongoing Data Analysis. 	September 2011 – June 2014
Ensuring that the school is not required to accept a teacher without the mutual consent of the teacher and principal, regardless of the teacher's seniority.	<p>The LEA has developed transfer criteria which include the fact that Transformation schools are not required to accept a teacher without the mutual consent of the teacher and principal, regardless of the teacher's seniority. In addition, in the partnership between NPS and BRICK there are clear understandings of how staff will be placed at BRICK Avon Academy. Below are excerpts from the draft MOU between BRICK and NPS:</p> <p>7.2 Selection, Supervision, and Evaluation of Personnel.</p> <p>(a) Principals and Other School Site Administrators. BRICK and NPS shall collaborate in the selection and assignment of principals and other administrators for each BRICK School(s). In this process, BRICK shall; with the benefit of information provided by NPS and with the approval of NPS, select administrators, unless such selection or assignment violates law, regulation or collective bargaining</p>	September 2011 – June 2014

	<p>agreement, NPS shall assign the selected administrators to the positions designated by BRICK. The collaboration shall include, but not be limited to, the description of desirable qualification and leadership qualities, timely sharing of relevant information and personnel files of candidates for positions between BRICK and NPS Superintendent (access limited to BRICK personnel necessary to the selection process), and a selection and assignment process that includes teachers, parents, and other school stakeholders. BRICK and NPS will hold each BRICK School principal accountable for the success of his or her BRICK School.</p> <p>(b) Teachers and Para-Professional. NPS, in collaboration with BRICK School(s), shall develop a process for selecting teachers and paraprofessionals, and BRICK School principal(s) shall have the authority to select, supervise and evaluate teachers and paraprofessionals at each BRICK School(s) consistent with the terms of the applicable collective bargaining agreement. BRICK shall not be bound to mutual consent in selection teachers and paraprofessionals to work at a BRICK School(s).</p> <p>(c) Non-Instructional Personnel. NPS, in collaboration with BRICK School(s), shall select school site non-instructional personnel consistent with the terms of applicable collective bargaining agreements and Civil Service Rules (for NPS employees). BRICK School principals shall have authority to supervise and evaluate school site non-instructional personnel consistent with applicable collective bargaining agreements and Civil Service Commission rules for NPS employees.</p>	
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Transformation SIG Required Activity – 5 Implement strategies that are designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in a transformation model.		
Implementation Guidance Strategies to recruit, place, and retain staff may include financial incentives or non–financial incentives, such as increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions.		
Evidence of Implementation Indicators	Implementation Description	Timeline
1. The SEA and LEA secure funding for long–term program sustainability.	<p>In selecting the external lead partner the LEA will pay particular attention to partners which have experience developing high–performing schools and a strong presence in the community. By the end of Year 3 the LEA and the school need to have embedded capacity which will enable them to sustain the reform.</p> <p>The LEA will also need to modify the current school budgetary arrangements to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is able to undertake budgeting review; • The school has maximum devolved authority, including the ability to move funds within headings, where this meets fiscal statutes; • The school has access to continuing funds to maintain an adequate Response–to– Intervention system; • The school has access to continuing funds to maintain adequate staffing positions that meet the social and emotional needs of children; • The school has access to continuing funds to maintain any agreed rewards and incentives, including all performance–related incentives. <p>In addition, with BRICK being a stakeholder in Avon Avenue School, BRICK has been able to bring in additional monies from local foundations to help with the transformation process of BRICK Avon Academy.</p>	September 2011 – June 2014
2. The SEA and LEA ensure that students have equal access to high–quality teachers.	<p>The LEA has reviewed and revised its policies to ensure that recommendations have been made to enable the school to effectively implement the reform measures. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer criteria have been established; A range of teaching posts which are specifically targeted at the turnaround school have been identified and advertized <p>BRICK has developed an extensive protocol for choosing and appointing all new staff. The process consists of:</p>	April 2011 – June 2014

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone Interview • Personal Interview • Writing Sample • teach a sample lesson or submit at least one Video Taped Lesson <p>Each prospective staff member will be evaluated by a rubric measuring them in the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration; • Flexibility; • Past Performance; • Change is Possible; • Technology; • Reflection. <p>For example, below are the questions from the rubric that are asked in the personal interview section regarding past performance of the potential candidates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you walk me through the process you use to create an effective lesson? • Are you familiar with Understanding by Design, also known as, Strategic Design or Backwards Design? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Define it in your own words. ○ Do you use this in your classroom? ○ Why? What advantages does it bring for you? • How have you used data to inform instruction? • How do you plan a lesson that promotes higher level thinking skills? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What kinds of activities must be present? • Explain your understanding of grouping children in the following ways: (1) Ability and (2) learning style. Which do you think is more effective and why? • Specifically for Lead Teachers: How have you given constructive feedback to individuals in the past? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Note: this can be for informal leadership roles <p>During this session of the personal interview while asking the questions above the competencies and indicators that are being looked for are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.C.1 Defines success as raising student achievement; • 3.C.2 Demonstrate past performance raising student achievement and articulates 	
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	<p>these gains with data/evidence;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.C.3 Believes school–wide interim and standardized assessments are necessary and important to evaluating and promoting high achievement for all students; • 3.C.4 Provides evidence or examples of using data to drive instruction and determine instructional needs of students, using this knowledge to plan for achievement goals; • 3.C.5 Speaks of using feedback to improve practice; • 3.C.6 Candidate able to identify what worked and what didn't (of video–taped lesson) and offer suggestions for improvement; • 3.C.7 Candidate provides evidence of giving constructive feedback that is evidence based and provides clear next steps. <p>To help facilitate a smooth hiring process and coordination with the LEA's HR department BRICK has hired a hiring coordinator that will work with the school leadership and the LEA to ensure that each candidate goes through the above described hiring process.</p>	
3. The LEA has an intensive long–term investment in developing instructional leadership capacity at the school, as well as at the LEA levels.	<p>The LEA will follow the recommendations of the NJ Educator Effectiveness Task Force. In particular the LEA will actively promote and develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher education pathways among staff; • Professional Learning Communities within and across turnaround schools; • Peer Assistance models; • Teacher internships. 	September 2011 – June 2014
4. The LEA delegates leadership to principals, instructional program leaders, and administrators.	<p>As evidenced by the partnership between NPS and BRICK, leadership has already been delegated to help turnaround Avon Avenue. As stated in the draft MOU between BRICK and NPS: 1.3 Authority. BRICK, in performing its duties and fulfilling its obligations under this MOU, shall have power and authority, consistent with Federal and State law and subject to the other terms and condition of this MOU and the oversight of NPS, to take such actions as may be necessary or desirable to properly and efficiently implement education services at the BRICK School(s) in cooperation with NPS. Should NPS reasonably determine that, for any reason, the health or safety of any student or students at the BRICK School(s) is jeopardized, NPS shall notify BRICK in writing and BRICK shall take all actions necessary to immediately resolve all issues, events, or items threatening the health or safety of any student or groups</p>	September 2011 – June 2014

	<p>of students. If, in NPS's sole reasonable discretion, NPS determines that BRICK failed to timely or adequately remedy any such health or safety issue, event, or item, NPS may take action to resolve the matter and exercise any remedy it may have under this MOU including, without limitation, termination of this MOU if necessary to assure the health and safety of students.</p> <p>In addition, the LEA will establish a Turnaround Region (Zone). All Turnaround and Transformation schools will report directly to the Turnaround Regional Superintendent.</p> <p>These schools will be outside the remit of the geographical Regional Superintendent.</p> <p>Although they will need to follow LEA procurement procedures the LEA will delegate leadership to the principal. The LEA will also actively encourage and support the principal to develop a collaborative School Leadership Team with shared responsibility for developing and guiding the school's learning agenda.</p>	
5. The LEA provides leadership PD that is job-embedded and focused on evidence-based decision making.	<p>In addition to providing in-house leadership PD, the LEA and BRICK will also engage external partners to provide job-embedded PD which is focused on evidence-based decision making. The LEA will also ensure that the School leadership team has access to high quality coaching and support, especially during Year 1.</p>	September 2011 – June 2014
6. The LEA includes non-monetary incentives for performance.	<p>The NJ Educator Effectiveness Task Force, March 2011 has identified a range of non-monetary incentives including the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Days to be used at the teachers' discretion including but not limited to workshops, observations and visitations. • PIF resources to attend conferences and/or seminars. • Ability to present at district and/or regional administrators' meetings. • Opportunities for distinguished teachers to facilitate after school sessions for teachers considering the process. • Chair/Member of School Governance sub-committee including but not limited to Curriculum & Instruction and/or professional development. • Mentor new teachers and/or become a cooperating teacher to college students. 	September 2011 – June 2014

	<p>In addition, as described in the above section incentives at BRICK Avon Academy will include, as appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designated Parking spaces;• Leaving early on Friday;• Certificates;• Recognition at staff, community meetings, during assemblies and morning announcements.	
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Transformation SIG Required Activity – 6

Comprehensive instructional reform strategies. The LEA must (a) use data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned from one grade to the next, as well as aligned with state academic standards; and (b) promote the continuous use of student data (such as from formative, interim, classroom, and summative assessments) to inform and differentiate instruction in order to meet the academic needs of individual students.

Implementation Guidance

If an LEA determines, based on a careful review of appropriate data, that the instructional program currently being implemented in a particular school is research-based and properly aligned, it may continue to implement that instructional program. However, it is expected that most LEAs with Tier I or Tier II schools will need to make at least minor adjustments to the instructional programs in those schools to ensure that those programs are, in fact, research-based and properly aligned.

Evidence of Implementation Indicators	Implementation Description	Timeline
1. SEA and LEA data systems facilitate the collection, interpretation, and use of data to drive instructional change.	<p>The LEA has introduced PowerSchool and SchoolNet. In the summer prior to the first year of the SIG grant the LEA and BRICK in conjunction with the school will develop rigorous standards based benchmark exams derived from common core and state standards. The LEA and BRICK will work together to ensure that the school maximizes the above assessments and systems.</p>	September 2011 – June 2014
	<p>In particular the use of PowerSchool to utilize statistical data and align with SchoolNet to analyze trends in student achievement as well as with various other data components.</p>	
	<p>The LEA and BRICK will use school data to assess and reevaluate school curriculum; and the BRICK School Design provides a program of instruction that serves all students at BRICK School(s) including without limitation, students with special needs. The BRICK School Design shall, among other things: (a) be research based; (b) include curriculum that addresses mathematics, literacy, science, art, music, world language, social studies, physical education and the use of education, assistive technology and transition services; (c) be consistent with New Jersey Department of Education's standards regarding the particular course of study and curriculum; (d) provide the services as specified in the student's IEP; and (e) provide supplemental assistance, including individual academic tutoring, psychological counseling, and health services. BRICK shall provide a reasonably detailed written description of the BRICK School Design. BRICK shall notify NPS in writing of any material modification of the BRICK School Design by March 15th of the school year before the school year in which modification will be implemented.</p> <p>Already in the 2010 – 2011 school year the LEA and BRICK gathered benchmark data on BRICK Avon Academy and this</p>	September 2010 – June 2014

	<p>data has driven the instructional changes for 2010– 2011 school year and modifications for the 2011 – 2012 school year.</p> <p>In Grades K–3 the 2010 – 2011 benchmark data revealed that many of our students had severe deficits in reading comprehension. The LEA and BRICK knew that in order to change the life trajectory of the students that a strong intervention and assessment program had to be implemented. In 2010 – 2011 the school implemented the Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress (STEP) program. As described by University of Chicago, “STEP defines the pathway and tracks the progress of pre–kindergarten through third grade students as they learn to read using research–based milestones. STEP enables educators to implement a developmental approach to teaching reading, using evidence to inform instruction, and introducing targeted interventions based on that evidence.”¹ It provides the school with a robust literacy assessment program that professionally develops teachers, will assess students periodically for the tier program and provides an instructional structure for early literacy.</p> <p>Some of the benefits of STEP are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides formative assessment data on all K–3 students which allows the teacher to provide individual instruction to help improve students’ reading • Early identifies students who are struggling with reading and gives the school the data to place the student in the future RTI program • Provides initial professional development to teachers and continues support throughout the year by conducting site visits. • STEP trainers help teachers dissect data and create action plans for each student. <p>Also, the school implemented Wilson Foundations which is phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics and spelling program. Each student in Grades K–3 receives a 30 minutes daily Foundations lesson within their language arts instruction period. Each lesson focuses on a set of sequenced skills that include print knowledge, alphabet awareness, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, decoding, vocabulary, fluency, and spelling. In addition, the program focuses on critical</p>	<p>September 2010 – June 2014</p> <p>August 2011 – June 2014</p> <p>September 2012 –</p>
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¹ *Improving adolescent literacy*, (2008) Kamil, M. L., Borman, G. D., Dole, J.,

Kral, C. C., Salinger, T., and Torgesen, J.

	<p>thinking, speaking and listening skills in the story time of the lesson. A school in Brooklyn, NY, improved their student outcomes and reduced unnecessary referrals to special education by establishing an RTI framework using Wilson Foundations in tier I and II students.² In 2011 – 2012 the LEA and BRICK plan to expand the individual intervention of the Foundations program for our tier II students.</p>	June 2014
	<p>The 2010 – 2011 benchmark data revealed that over 80% of our 4th – 8th grade population are below their grade level in reading. As a result, the school community took a year to investigate different curriculums and interventions that we could implement to move students to their respective grade levels. After a year of investigation we determined that READ 180 was the most effective program to accelerate student achievement when the program is implemented with fidelity. Many studies as pointed out by the What Works Clearing house confirm that READ 180 has a positive effect on comprehension and general literacy achievement for adolescent learners.³ This core program will serve as the base for the tier I and II of the Response to Intervention system. This program lends itself to help students directly addresses individual needs through differentiated instruction, adaptive and instructional software, high-interest literature, and direct instruction in reading, writing, and vocabulary skills.</p>	September 2011 – June 2014
	<p>To help improve student outcomes in writing BRICK and NPS are looking to adopt a school wide writing program that would help students in their writing through the traditional way and integrate technology. In the exploration phase the partnership researched the Writing Matters program. As described by Writing Matters, “[The program] is grounded in best practices in writing instruction, drawing from extensive research. [The] Content was developed with nationally recognized author-educators, including Heather Lattimer and Georgia Heard, bringing best practice to life in the form of lessons and activities enhanced by 21st century tools. Genre study units feature animations that clarify concepts and engage students, especially visual learners.” Writing Matters is broken down into a series of four to six week units. The units address a specific genre of writing: persuading, conveying experiencing, explaining and analyzing literature. In addition, the program offers a</p>	September 2010 – June 2014
		September 2010 – June 2014

² *Public School 380: Brooklyn, New York*, (2009) Sandi Feldman

³ *One hundred one studies reviewed investigated the effects of READ 180 on adolescent learners*, (2010) What Works Clearing House (WWC)

	<p>comprehensive professional development program that provides teachers with ongoing mentoring to help implement the writing curriculum. At this point the final decision to go with this writing program has not been made. However, BRICK and NPS will implement a writing program across grade levels.</p> <p>Also, the 2010 – 2011 benchmark data revealed that our students were not on grade level in math. It became apparent that the programs the school was using were not meeting the needs of our students. In addition, the programs did not have a strong intervention component. Similar to our exploration process with the ELA program BRICK, NPS and BRICK Avon Academy consulted advisors, professors from Rutgers University, high performing schools, the school community and our math coach regarding programs that would have a dramatic impact on math instruction at BRICK Avon Academy. While the exploration process is not completed at this time the school is looking to adopt Math in Focus: The Singapore Approach for Grades K–2 and for tier I and II for Grades 3–5. This program concentrates on fewer topics taught in greater depth at each grade level. The school community believes that this type of programs suits the needs of the population that the school serves. In addition the program provides enhancements for differentiated instruction: remediation, re-teaching, enrichment, assessment, and additional practice. The partnership is still searching for a strong intervention program for tier III students in 6–8.</p> <p>For Grades 6–8 the partnership is investigating programs that are tailored towards tier III and tier II students. At this point the community is leaning towards the Ramp–Up to Pre–Algebra program created by Americas Choice. The program prepares middle school students to complete Algebra by the end of 8th grade. According to a study completed on the use of Ramp–Up in the East Orange School District New Jersey. The program showed that after one year, students at all performance levels—including those working below, above, and at grade level—exceeded expected gains on the state test. In addition, the partnership is looking at Math Triumphs and AMP Math.</p> <p>The LEA and BRICK recognize that any program is only as good as the practitioner in the classroom. Thus to help implement these instructional changes the partnership is looking to decrease our math and literacy teacher to coach ratio from 30:1 to 15:1. This will help by having the math and literacy coaches work with teachers in depth on implementing the programs with fidelity and provide assistance in the classroom with tier 2 students. In addition, the student reading and math specialists will meet the needs of the tier II and III students by remediating students in a pull–out program.</p>	<p>September 2010 – June 2014</p> <p>September 2010 – June 2014</p> <p>September 2010 – June 2014</p>
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	<p>Moreover, as mentioned above the benchmark data revealed that we need to provide interactive ways to engage students in making dramatic gains. In 2010 –2011 the LEA and BRICK piloted online web–based instruction, practice and assessment programs to help engage and inspire children in their personal academic growth. These programs will be expanded to provide additional help with tier 2 and tier 3 students for differentiated practice. Also, READ 180 is a computer based literacy instruction program that will give teachers another data point to judge the progress of their students. At this point the school is researching for an online Math Program similar to Khan Academy that will give teachers an online resource for differentiate instruction.</p> <p>The LEA will work in partnership with the school and the external lead partner (BRICK) to continue ensure that appropriate PD is provided to ensure that the school is able to use data effectively to drive instructional change both at grade level and vertically across grades.</p> <p>NPS and BRICK are fully aware the in order for the school to dramatically change the academic outcomes of their students the school must also support the social and emotional development of students. Academics and social and emotional health are linked in the environment the school serves. To help meet the social and emotional needs of our students the school needs: an additional guidance counselor (300:1 ratio), crisis teacher and a behavioral specialist.</p> <p>Also, the LEA will work with the administration to have each teacher have at least two individual conferences with the instructional leader. At these conferences, teachers will bring their goals, data, student work, projects and lessons and explain how they are making sure each student is meeting the state standards.</p>	
2. SEA, LEA, and school provide access to timely data that includes disaggregated statewide assessment scores, and school performance and aggregated classroom observation	<p>With the introduction of system wide processes including PowerSchool, SchoolNet and benchmark exams the school will have access to timely data including disaggregated statewide assessment scores, school performance and aggregated classroom level data.</p> <p>Qualitative data from multiple classroom observations by the principal, school administrators, peer-reviewers, coaches and external partners will also be collated.</p> <p>The LEA and BRICK have also hired a data coach for BRICK Avon Academy who is responsible for disaggregating data and making sure teachers have access to data. In addition, the data coach follows the lead of the instructional leader and provides the data necessary for the instructional cabinet to make effective and timely decisions.</p>	September 2011 – June 2014

data.		
3. LEA and school ensure that school aligns instruction with standards and benchmarks.	<p>In the summer prior to year one of the grant teachers will attend a three week summer institute where they will work within grade levels to select power standards and develop a curriculum map for the school. Grade level teams will map out, month by month, what they will be teaching. After grade teams map their standards, grade team leaders will meet vertically to create an overall school curriculum map. It will contain performance indicators, essential questions, skills, assessments, specialized vocabulary and materials to be used.</p> <p>After mapping the power standards grade levels will be able to create the benchmark exams for their students. The entire instructional team will be involved in creating the exams. In addition, the school will use a question– bank software program to help create the questions for the exam. At this time BRICK and NPS have been researching for providers that offer a bank of questions based upon the common core standards. Pearson has presented an option to BRICK and the LEA. Prior to year one of the grant a provider should be selected.</p> <p>Through the Instructional Cycle, teachers are expected to have determined multiple forms of formative and summative assessments for each unit. Backwards design encourages them to consider assessment first when planning all lessons. This ensures that every lesson has a clear purpose and that there are opportunities for teachers to collect evidence of student progress. Teachers are expected to modify BRICK’s common “Mastery Tracker” (excel spreadsheet) to ensure an easy and clear way to monitor student progress throughout the unit. In addition to summative assessments, all diagnostics, progress checks and end of year summative assessments are inputted into the “Mastery Tracker.” Teachers then use this data to inform their instructional cycle. In addition, teachers will be able to upload their own assessment data into SchoolNet to get a clear picture of student achievement.</p> <p>Throughout the year during Grade Level Team meetings, teachers will input data and discuss results. The Grade Level Leader has the responsibility to compile data from all classes into a comprehensive “Mastery Tracker” so the Grade Level Team can identify trends across the grade levels. The collected data is then used to determine which objectives require re–teaching or remediation and for what individual or groups of students.</p> <p>The LEA and BRICK Avon Academy plans to rearrange the calendar so that when benchmark exam scores are returned</p>	<p>August 2011 – September 2011</p> <p>September 2011 – June 2014</p> <p>June 2011 – August 2011</p> <p>September 2011 – June 2014</p>

	<p>teachers have a professional development day to analyze data and readjust unit plans. In addition, after each benchmark assessment teachers will draw up individual plans “BRICK Plan” for each child and a whole classroom plan from the data.</p> <p>The academic program at BRICK Avon Academy is designed to build students into globally minded citizens. Students at BRICK Avon Academy are at the center of the learning experience and internalize that intelligence is not something you are born with, but something that you work hard to achieve. Students are empowered to take charge of their education and challenge themselves to create opportunities otherwise not available. Through a global perspective and authentic, inquiry based learning experiences, students learn to be socially conscious and caring citizens who are concerned with improving themselves and their community. BRICK students will become more responsible, intelligent and creative.</p> <p>The BRICK Avon Academy school community believes in maintaining an environment where the focus is on developing students into Responsible, Intelligent and Creative citizens. To that end, BRICK Avon Academy students and staff utilize technology on a daily basis and engage with each other and those around the world in creative and authentic ways to build a global mindedness. BRICK believes that an open door policy focused on exchanging best practices with local, national and global schools, builds and develops a community of learners. Through a balance of effective instructional practices, constantly improving students and staff and efficient school building systems, BRICK Avon Academy strives to be an exemplar school.</p> <p>BRICK Avon Academy students are taught to own their learning experience. Teachers spend a significant time at the beginning of the year investing students in their learning experience and consistently reinforce these mindsets throughout the year. During each transdisciplinary unit, students are offered multiple opportunities to explore ideas and topics of their choosing. In addition, students understand their strengths and the areas where they need to improve and understand that improvement is a direct result of hard work and commitment.</p> <p>To meet instructional goals, BRICK Avon Academy has established 5 Instructional BRICKs that serve as the cornerstones of our instructional program and drive all decision-making.</p> <p>The BRICKs are as follows:</p>	
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	<div> <div>Long Term, Unit and Lesson</div> <div>Common Planning Time</div> <div>Data Informed Instruction</div> <div>Common Assessments</div> <div>Student Investment and Choice</div> </div> <p>Teachers will utilize the transdisciplinary method of unit planning for most subject areas. BRICK realizes that not all subjects and topics can be fully transdisciplinary, but expects teachers to creatively plan reading, writing, social studies, science, and enrichment classes using the transdisciplinary method of planning.</p> <p>When utilizing transdisciplinary unit planning, students are still expected to receive reading, writing, math and science on a daily basis. It is possible that during those established times within the daily schedule, the teacher may be instructing within a transdisciplinary unit.</p> <p>Mathematics in Grades K–5 will follow the scope and sequence of the aligned math curriculum. Teachers will utilize various supplemental materials to strengthen the program and ensure student mastery of grade level standards. When appropriate, teachers are encouraged to incorporate mathematics into the transdisciplinary units.</p> <p>Word study and phonics in Grades K–3 will follow an established sequence.</p> <p>As stated above, Grade Level Teams may determine that some knowledge and skills cannot be fully integrated using transdisciplinary unit planning. In this case, some subject areas may call for stand-alone units. These units may include science and social studies, however it is expected that these instances be rare and a unit of inquiry should occur simultaneously.</p> <p>The following graphic provides a representation of the overall structure for unit planning:</p>
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	<div>Units of Inquiry</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Reading •Writing •Social Studies •Science •Performing Arts •Visual Arts •Physical Education 	<div>Stand Alone Subjects</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Mathematics •Word Study •Phonics •World Language 	<div>Potential Stand Alone Units</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Science •Social Studies 	
4. LEA and school dedicate structured time for PD and staff collaboration around data interpretation.	<p>The LEA and BRICK recognize that giving teachers the time to collaborate around data is extremely vital for the school as a whole. In addition, data collaboration time is a cornerstone of the school's Response To Intervention system. Teachers need time to plan how they will address the needs of Tier II and III students.</p> <p>Underneath the guidance of the school data coach one instructional cabinet meeting will be devoted an overall data map of the school. This will help the instructional team monitor the effectiveness of the instructional program and the RTI program.</p> <p>In addition, at grade level meetings data will be used on an ongoing basis to help determine what the next steps will be. Grade level teams will sit down with an administrator or coach and review the data, plan and modify current lessons and unit plans.</p> <p>During the Summer Institute all staff will receive training in data –informed instruction which will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals of data informed instruction; • The development of uniform school protocol for data analysis, reflection and maintenance; • Data analysis including individual student and cohort tracking to identify value added growth; • Summative Assessment and State Test Review; • Quarterly Formative Assessment Review. <p>In addition, the LEA and BRICK will rearrange the traditional district calendar, for BRICK Avon Academy, so that when benchmark exam scores are returned teachers have a professional development day to analyze data and readjust unit plans. The idea of a PD day following benchmark exams follows behind many high performing data informed schools.</p> <p>Also, the grade level teams in K–5 and the department team in</p>			September 2011 – June 2014

	6–8 review all available qualitative and quantitative data on a regular basis.	
5. LEA and school demonstrate use of data to guide instructional change, and the school defines a process where teacher and administrator teams meet to review data and plan improvement.	<p>BRICK Avon Academy teachers will also utilize SchoolNet to track interim assessment data. Once new data has been uploaded into SchoolNet, teachers utilize reports to inform their planning and instruction</p> <p>BRICK Avon Academy believes the only way to ensure teachers fully understand what students have learned is to administer various assessments throughout the year. BRICK Avon Academy utilizes the following assessments to gauge student mastery of grade level material:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnostics; • Interim assessments; • Final exams; • Summative unit assessments; • Formative assessments; • Performance assessments; • NJPASS; • NJASK (<i>New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge</i>). <p>During Grade Level and Department planning time staff monitors and evaluate the assessment results and plan for further improvement. In addition, this data will be used to place students in the RTI tier system.</p>	September 2011 – June 2014

Transformation SIG Permissible Activity: A transformation model may also implement other strategies.

Implementation Guidance

An LEA may also implement comprehensive instructional reform strategies, such as—

- a) Conducting periodic reviews to ensure that the curriculum is being implemented with fidelity, is having the intended impact on student achievement, and is modified if ineffective;
- b) Implementing a school-wide “response-to-intervention” model;
- c) Providing additional supports and professional development to teachers and principals in order to implement effective strategies to support students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment and to ensure that limited English proficient students acquire language skills to master academic content;
- d) Using and integrating technology-based supports and interventions as part of the instructional program; and
- e) In secondary schools—
 - Increasing rigor by offering opportunities for students to enroll in advanced coursework such as Advanced Placement; International Baccalaureate; or science, technology, engineering, and mathematics courses, especially those that incorporate rigorous and relevant project-, inquiry-, or design-based contextual learning opportunities, early-college high schools, dual enrollment programs, or thematic learning academies that prepare students for college and careers, including by providing appropriate supports designed to ensure that low-achieving students can take advantage of these programs and coursework;
 - Improving student transition from middle to high school through summer transition programs or freshman academies;
 - Increasing graduation rates through, for example, credit-recovery programs, re-engagement strategies, smaller learning communities, competency-based instruction and performance-based assessments, and acceleration of basic reading and mathematics skills; or
 - Establishing early-warning systems to identify students who may be at risk of failing to achieve to high standards or graduate.

Evidence of Implementation Indicators	Implementation Description	Timeline
Using and integrating technology-based supports and interventions as part of the instructional program	<p>As pointed out by Heidi Hayes Jacob, in order for schools to make authentic connections with students, schools must change strategies to fit this new age of students. All teachers appointed to BRICK Avon Academy are evaluated for their knowledge, interest and commitment to the use of technology-based supports and interventions as part of the instructional program. This includes evaluating how well the teacher can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate that technology is an essential component in planning and delivering instruction; • Detail how technology can/has been used to increase student achievement; • Demonstrate an understanding of technology (knowledge of how to use, discussion of e-board, clickers, etc.). 	September 2011 – June 2014
International Baccalaureate	<p>BRICK in partnership with NPS will start the International Baccalaureate (IB) application process during the 2013–2014 school year and aims to be authorized as a Primary Years Programme IB World School by 2017. During the 2016–2017 school year BRICK will begin the IB application process for the Middle Years Programme and aims to be authorized as a Middle Years Programme IB World School by 2020. BRICK and NPS shall cooperate if there needs to be a change with the application dates above. However, BRICK Avon Academy will start to implement some of the IB framework starting in year 2012 leading up to the first application phase.</p> <p>BRICK's unique academic program will expose students to a rigorous, globally minded curriculum. Through the integration of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme and Common Core Standards, students will use their naturally inquisitive nature to explore their local and global community and develop their own sense of identity and belonging.</p> <p>Through transdisciplinary units, students gain a strong, connected foundation in not only literacy, math, social studies and science, but also foreign language, the arts and physical education. Students will leave BRICK Avon Academy with the knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes and actions required to be productive citizens who are ready for college and life in an interconnected global society.</p> <p>BRICK Avon Academy teachers will utilize an</p>	September 2013 – June 2014

	<p>instruction cycle that consists of planning, implementation and reflection. Teachers will collaboratively plan long term, transdisciplinary units and lesson plans using the backwards planning method. Transdisciplinary units allow all teachers, including specials teachers, to create a comprehensive academic experience.</p> <p>All teachers participate in grade team collaborative planning to ensure that grades are vertically aligned and grade team leaders ensure that plans are articulated so that each grade strategically builds upon the next. Teachers collect a variety of formative and summative assessment data and use it to fine tune lessons, determine interventions and plan for future units. Teachers spend time throughout each unit collaboratively reflecting on the instruction cycle and planning future professional development.</p>	
Response-to-intervention	<p>The LEA and BRICK believe that all students should be met at their level and appropriately challenged to meet high standards. A root cause of the failure of Avon is that the school did not strategically use interventions to address the needs of students. As a result, the BRICK model calls for a whole school Response to Intervention (RTI) system. The RTI model will provide a framework in which data can be relied on as the basis for making relative judgments and provide students with interventions to accelerate their rate of learning. The program includes hiring student specialists, additional math and literacy coaches, an additional social worker and an additional guidance counselor to help assist in addressing the needs of children.</p> <p>As recommended by the RTI action network, the school would adopt a three tier process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tier I: High-Quality Classroom Instruction, Screening, and Group Interventions. • Tier II: Targeted Interventions. • Tier III: Intensive Interventions and Comprehensive Evaluation. <p>Students in tier I will be addressed with the traditional teacher in the classroom. Students in tier II will be addressed by the classroom teacher, coaches and the student specialist. The students in tier III our most vulnerable population of students; and they will be addressed by the student specialists. Students in tier III will receive at least three sessions per week of pull out instruction in the subject they need additional help.</p>	September 2011 – June 2014

	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Robust data system (Multiple data points);• Scaffolded Instruction (Tiered instruction);• High quality Interventions. <p>Reading specialists and Math specialists will be the main drivers behind providing the additional support for the RTI program. The specialists will primarily concentrate on the tier III kids and will work with the overflow from the tier II students. Changing the ratio teacher to coach from 30:1 to 15:1 will allow for the coach to work with teachers with meeting the needs of tier II and tier I students. In addition, the coaches will be able to provide additional support for the tier II students.</p>	
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Transformation SIG Required Activity – 7a

Increasing learning time and creating community-oriented schools. The LEA must (a) establish schedules and strategies that provide increased learning time for all students

Implementation Guidance

“Increased learning time” means using a longer school day, week, or year schedule to significantly increase the total number of school hours to include additional time for: (a) instruction in core academic subjects, including English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography; (b) instruction in other subjects and enrichment activities that contribute to a well-rounded education, including, for example, physical education, service learning, and experiential and work-based learning opportunities that are provided by partnering, as appropriate, with other organizations; and (c) teachers to collaborate, plan, and engage in PD within and across grades and subjects. Research supports the effectiveness of well-designed programs that expand learning time by a minimum of 300 hours per school year.

Evidence of Implementation Indicators	Implementation Description	Timeline
<p>1. The SEA and LEA are familiar with evidence-based practices to provide increased learning time.</p>	<p>The LEA is aware that the SBR shows a direct correlation between well-designed programs that expand learning time and student academic growth.</p> <p>In order to help execute the mission NPS and BRICK plan to increase learning time for teachers and student by over 285 hours. After the first year we will adjust the extended learning time based upon the suggestions of the staff, parents and community. In addition, the LEA and BRICK will partner with NJPAC to provide dance, music and visual art classes to the students to expose the students to many different art forms.</p> <p>The LEA and BRICK have done a needs assessment and have increased learning time by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extending the school day by 60 minutes (except for June) = 160/hrs • Creating a three week summer teacher institute = 90/hrs • Providing each child at least two extended learning opportunities “Saturday excursions” = 12/hrs • One extended day per month (3/hrs) for professional development for staff members. = 27/hrs <p>The 60 minutes that will be extended to each day will be used to address the individual needs of students. Time will be added to the Language Arts and Math block to provide additional time for tier II and tier III interventions.</p>	<p>September 2011 – June 2014</p>

	<p>Each child would attend at least two “Saturday Excursions” throughout the school year. These excursions would be tailored to expose students to unique opportunities for learning that are not available within the four walls of their classroom. In addition, these excursions would be related to the topics or concepts being discussed in their classroom.</p> <p>In addition, it is our goal to create a continuum of instruction and content through the summer vacation for students. Currently, BRICK in conjunction with Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL) has received a matching grant from the Victoria Foundation to provide a five week summer program to the students of BRICK Avon Academy. In the BELL summer programs students typically gain 3 months or more in literacy and math skills after just six weeks. In contrast, the average student living in a low-income neighborhood loses more than 2 months’ grade-equivalent reading and math skills.</p> <p>Also, to address the needs of our tier 2 students a targeted after school enrichment program will be offered to help them succeed. While the program will be offered to our tier 3 students, the LEA recognizes that this population is less likely to attend an after school program. Thus, it is important that we provide all the interventions the school can for tier 3 students during the day.</p>	
2. The LEA identifies community needs and partnership opportunities.	<p>BRICK Avon Academy is located in Essex County, New Jersey, in the city of Newark. For almost a generation, Newark has been ranked among the top ten poorest cities in the nation with a population over 250,000 (US Census). Newark’s residents have a median income of \$35,296, half the statewide median household income of \$70,398. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 25 percent of Newark residents live below the federal poverty level, almost four times the average for the state (American Community Survey). Crime, substance abuse, and gang activity, as well as diabetes, heart disease and high rates of HIV infection, are just some of the chronic problems that challenge the well-being of our children and families.</p> <p>These factors have a severe impact on the lives of the children, particularly those under the age of eighteen. Our students disproportionately experience the conditions associated with socioeconomic disadvantages and racial isolation that have been well documented in urban communities. The area that BRICK Avon Academy serves in one of the top five crime ridden</p>	September 2011 – June 2014

	<p>areas in Newark, NJ. Students come from a variety of home including: single family homes, public housing, apartments and temporary housing for the displaced. In addition, over 80% of our population qualifies for free lunch.</p> <p>The LEA in partnership with BRICK is aware that one of the essentials to school turnaround, as pointed out by Tony Wagner, is creating multiple partnerships between teachers and with students, parents, community organizations and community members. The groundwork for partnering with the community started with the collaboration between NPS and BRICK. As written in the draft MOU “BRICK emerged out of a collaborative effort to create a new model for delivery of NPS educational services in Newark, to improve schools and school communities, develop best practices, and share them throughout the District.”</p> <p>BRICK has taken the lead in creating, filtering and strategically aligning partnerships to help execute the mission of BRICK. Thus far, BRICK has been able to secure additional funding from philanthropic organizations, built partnerships with community organizations and created a volunteer base to help tutor struggling kids.</p> <p>The LEA, BRICK and the staff of BRICK Avon Academy recognize that many of our families suffer from many hardships. Many of the students come to school witnessing events that silently traumatize them and break apart their families. There is much healing that needs to take place in the community surrounding BRICK Avon Academy. As an expansion of the outreach program a community specialist will be hired with SIG funds to help build a parent involvement program “Parent University.” The “Parent University” will provide crisis intervention, therapeutic counseling, and case management and education classes to the families within the community of BRICK Avon Academy.</p> <p>The LEA will issue an RFP to have a third party family-centered and family-driven program that will help build and sustain healthy, productive and long-term family relationships.</p> <p>Programs could consist of, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and manage a family budget; • Family Literacy Nights; 	<p>September 2011 – June 2014</p> <p>May 2012 – June 2012</p> <p>September 2012 – June 2014</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Math Nights; • Family Movie Nights; • Conversation Dinners (Potluck); • Family breakfasts events; • Income tax preparation; • Negotiate the array of non-profit and governmental social services; • Find affordable and reliable day care and health care services; • Manage supervised parental visits while working to reunify the family; • Locate appropriate and accessible community services. <p>These programs would happen monthly with a goal of providing at least four programs per month for parents to attend.</p> <p>The LEA and BRICK recognize in order to build a global school a strong parent link must be created and that will happen by healing the community that we serve.</p>	
3. The LEA allocates funding for extended-learning programs.	<p>The LEA has agreed to allocate funds for extended learning hours. This will include stipends for staff.</p> <p>The LEA will also continue to support the breakfast and nutritional snacks program for extended learning hours.</p> <p>The LEA will provide a targeted after school program that the school will gear towards students who are in Tier 2. In the after school program students will attend a three day program where they will receive targeted interventions in the subjects they have been identified as needing additional help.</p> <p>The LEA will provide some resources and support a summer program for student at BRICK Avon Academy.</p> <p>The LEA, the school, and the external lead partner will also seek outside funding, or payment in kind, from philanthropic organizations and local businesses to provide assistance with community and families.</p>	September 2011 – June 2014
4. The LEA supports school leadership in developing and sustaining community partnerships.	<p>The LEA supports school leadership in creating and sustaining partnerships by collaborating with BRICK who manages all partnerships with the school. In addition, the Community Relations specialist will develop a range of committees and working parties to coordinate parent and community partnerships. The LEA also supports community partnerships by employing a full time parent liaison.</p>	September 2011 – June 2014

<p>5. The LEA provides PD to ensure that extended-learning programs are aligned with the school curriculum.</p>	<p>The LEA and the external lead partner will provide ongoing PD for staff which will ensure that the extended learning program is aligned with the school curriculum. In addition, all extended learning programs will meet with a representative from the school administration once a month to make sure the program is aligned with the schools curriculum and mission.</p>	<p>September 2011 – June 2014</p>
<p>6. The LEA has a system of assessing the progress of the extended-learning program and using data to guide instructional changes.</p>	<p>The school data coach will develop monitoring and evaluation processes and procedures to assess the progress and impact of all extended learning time activities. The data coach will then turnkey the information to the instructional team.</p> <p>The school data coach will track trends in data between specific initiatives, such as the Saturday Academy and student academic growth.</p>	<p>September 2011 – June 2014</p>

Transformation SIG Required Activity – 7b

Increasing learning time and creating community-oriented schools. The LEA must (b) provide ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement.

Implementation Guidance

In general, family and community engagement means strategies to increase the involvement and contributions, in both school-based and home-based settings, of parents and community partners that are designed to support classroom instruction and increase student achievement. Examples of mechanisms that can encourage family and community engagement include the establishment of organized parent groups, holding public meetings involving parents and community members to review school performance and help develop school improvement plans, using surveys to gauge parent and community satisfaction and support for local public schools, implementing complaint procedures for families, coordinating with local social and health service providers to help meet family needs, and parent education classes (including GED, adult literacy, and ESL programs).

Evidence of Implementation Indicators	Implementation Description	Timeline
<p>1. The LEA ensures each school has a strong academic program, with all other services complementing the central academic mission.</p>	<p>Students will be exposed to a strong rigorous curriculum closely aligned with Common Core and New Jersey state standards.</p> <p>Teachers will work collaboratively to create comprehensive, rigorous long term plans, unit plans, and lesson plans using Wiggins and McTigue's <i>Understanding By Design</i> method of backwards planning.</p> <p>Collaborative planning will ensure that grades are vertically aligned and articulated so that each grade builds upon the next. Through diagnostic tests, teachers will meet students at their individual academic levels, including students with special needs and English language learners. Teachers will use formative and summative assessments to gather real-time data to inform their individual, small group, and whole class instruction. Through tracking and precise planning, all students will approach grade level at a developmentally appropriate rate.</p>	<p>September 2011 – June 2014</p>
<p>2. The LEA supports sustainable and effective community partnerships (e.g., requires partnering organizations to designate an employee at school site to operate as a contact point for school, family, and community; and develops joint financing of facilities and programs with community and local</p>	<p>At BRICK Avon Academy we believe that the achievement gap is our nation's most pressing issue. As such, Newark's children do not have equal access to a high quality education that prepares them to be college and life ready. BRICK is not content to operate in a society where all children do not have access to the high quality education they deserve. To this end, BRICK has formed a strong public-private partnership with the Newark Public Schools (NPS), with the purpose of building a school community that develops globally minded</p>	<p>September 2011 – June 2014</p>

<p>government).</p>	<p>students.</p> <p>BRICK, LEA and the community relations coordinator will work closely with the School Leadership team to develop effective community partnerships.</p> <p>For example, BRICK has partnered with Strong Healthy Communities Initiative. Led by The Center for Collaborative Change and Prudential, Newark's Strong Healthy Communities Initiative (SHCI) is a shared commitment from over 30 partners across sectors, to collaboratively transform individual and community health. SHCI defines individual health broadly, encompassing physical, mental and emotional wellness– all required for individual growth, achievement and productivity. Likewise, community health includes social, environmental, structural, institutional, governmental and economic wellbeing.</p> <p>The grant supports game-changing innovations that will address intractable problems affecting the lives of low-income people. The grant will holistically address the unequal conditions (healthcare, housing, foods, safety, and social, structural and physical environment) in low-income neighborhoods that result in poor health and achievement and will link these efforts to education and workforce systems, thereby maximizing the initiative's returns in individual and collective economic advancement. Integrated efforts will concentrate resources on neighborhood encompassing BRICK Avon Academy.</p> <p>BRICK is an official partner in the grant which will help transform the neighborhood that surrounds BRICK Avon Academy. The initiative will drive a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization strategy focused on alleviating the environmental conditions that create barriers to the educational and economic advancement of residents.</p> <p>In addition, the grant will provide a medical/dental mobile command unit that will be deployed to the school 20/hrs per week for the students of BRICK Avon Academy. The</p>	
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	command unit will also provide eye care with prior notice to the Jewish Renaissance Medical Center. Also, the grant will provide additional embedded behavioral care such as group therapy, parent and family therapy and health courses for students.	
3. Schools involve a broad representation of parents, community members, school staff, and other stakeholders in planning and implementing services offered at the school site.	The school will develop a Community Partnership Committee, underneath the leadership of the community specialists, involving students, parents, staff, and other stakeholders to develop and review services to be offered at the school site. The committee will meet at least every other month to discuss matters that pertain to the school.	September 2012 – June 2014
4. Schools provide PD to ensure that staff members work effectively with partnering organizations.	<p>The school will provide a range of PD – facilitated by external partners with experience and expertise in community-based learning and will include partnering organizations working alongside teachers on educational programming/curricular integration.</p> <p>These activities will be designed to enable staff members to gain the confidence which they will need to actively embrace and work effectively with partnership organizations.</p>	September 2011 – June 2014
5. LEA and school leaders periodically report to, and solicit input from, the school committee, staff, families, and community on school improvement	<p>Community leaders will be actively encouraged to visit the school and be guest leaders both at staff PD and community events.</p> <p>The school will establish a Community Partnership Committee which will report back to all stakeholders.</p> <p>In addition, the school will encourage and seek individuals and organizations that will provide curriculum enhancing programs to our students.</p>	September 2011 – June 2014

Transformation SIG Permissible Activity: A transformation model may also implement other strategies.		
Implementation Guidance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) An LEA may also implement other strategies that extend learning time and create community-oriented schools, such as—Partnering with parents and parent organizations, faith- and community-based organizations, health clinics, other state or local agencies, and others to create safe school environments that meet students’ social, emotional, and health needs; b) Extending or restructuring the school day so as to add time for such strategies as advisory periods that build relationships between students, faculty, and other school staff; c) Implementing approaches to improve school climate and discipline, such as implementing a system of positive behavioral supports or taking steps to eliminate bullying and student harassment; or d) Expanding the school program to offer full-day kindergarten or pre-kindergarten. 		
Evidence of Implementation Indicators	Implementation Description	Timeline
Implementing approaches to improve school climate and discipline, such as implementing a system of positive behavioral supports or taking steps to eliminate bullying and student harassment	<p>BRICK Avon Academy will implement a school wide social skills program to promote social and emotional skills that underpin effective learning, positive behavior, regular attendance, staff effectiveness and the emotional health and well-being of all who learn and work in the school. Also, the school will choose to implement a common purpose and approach to discipline throughout the school to keep a consistent structure for students and provide a sense of community within the building.</p> <p>In the 2010 –2011 school year the school community investigated different holistic approaches to changing school culture. After a careful analysis of different programs the school is leaning towards Responsive Classroom program for K–5 and Developmental Designs for Grades 6–8. Both programs have intensive research to support their programs and are widely used throughout the United States. A study conducted by Dr. Stephen N. Elliott concluded that students exposed to Responsive Classroom practices over the course of a school year generally were perceived to exhibit higher levels of social skills and fewer problem behaviors than those with limited or no exposure. Most importantly the findings help across racially diverse sub-samples.⁴</p> <p>The fundamental of both programs is that enjoyable relationships are the foundation for success in school.</p>	September 2011 – June 2014

⁴ *The Responsive Classroom Approach: Its Effectiveness and Acceptability,*

(1995) Dr. Stephen N. Elliott

	<p>This fundamental will suit well with the population that we serve. Some of the practices that teachers will be trained on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using practices such as Morning Meeting, rule creation with students, modeling, and role-playing with the whole class; • Using further modeling, additional role-playing, and individual written agreements with students who need more intensive supports; • Using positive reinforcing and reminding teacher language; • Doing group reflection activities such as compliment circles and closing circles. <p>To help implement both programs the school would like to reduce its student to guidance counselor ratio from 650:1 to 325:1. As of right now with the population that the school serves one guidance counselor cannot meet all of the varying needs of 650 kids. To build a positive culture and improve student achievement the school should come close to the recommendation ratio from the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) of 250-to-1. Many of our students could benefit for the services guidance counselors provide such as resolving emotional, social or behavioral problems.</p> <p>On another note, to help curtail discipline and to ensure the instructional leader has a laser focus on the instructional program a behavioral specialist will be hired. The behavioral specialist will operate as a Dean of Discipline and would be the first in line to deal with behavior situations that might arise. The behavioral specialist will not take care of all discipline because it is imperative that teachers resolve situations within classrooms. However, with the population we serve there are many situations that warrant the attention of an administrator. The behavioral specialist will come up with creative ways to help reverse student negative behaviors. The specialists will coordinate all services to help the student be successful. In addition, they would be the contact between the school and parents when it comes to behavior matters.</p> <p>On another note, the behavioral specialist will also be responsible for implementing the school-wide discipline tracker/reward system (BRICK bucks). This system will allow for the school to provide students with an extra incentive to be responsible students. Students would accumulate BRICK bucks and be able to purchase items from the BRICK store and earn the chance to attend the</p>	
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	<p>end of the year trip.</p> <p>In addition, in Grades 6–8 the school will maintain the Advisory program. The advisory program was created: to develop students’ social and emotional skills, each student will participate in “club advisories.” These small group advisory periods will serve as a space for students to develop close, positive relationships with teachers and peers.</p> <p>Also, as part of the school–wide strategy to create a positive, nurturing school climate a safe space must be created for students who need time outside the classroom to problem solve and provide mediation to them for their negative behavior. This is not dumping ground for troubled students but a space where the school could address the students with the extreme behavior problems without the student disturbing the instructional sanctity of their classroom. A crisis teacher, preferably with a special education certification, would operate the space. Students who enter this space will go through an orientation with the behavioral specialist or guidance counselor who will explain the rules, benefits and consequences of the program. The behavioral specialist will then ensure that the student is given work from their teacher(s). The crisis teacher will make sure the student does their work, will keep accurate records and be fair and consistent. Most importantly the crisis teacher will continue to assess the student as if they were in a regular classroom. Students will only be assigned to this after other disciplinary measures have been tried. Student should expect to be assigned to the crisis teacher between one and five days.</p> <p>The school will also address social skills by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instituting a school wide discipline tracker / reward system (BRICK bucks); • Developing a safe space for extreme behavior situations (Crisis teachers); • Providing collaboration time for teachers regarding common students; • Arranging for professional development on dealing with different social and behavior issues; • Providing school embedded social services for children; • Offering extended learning opportunities; • Creating an on–line centralized system for documentation for IR&S; • Implementing a peer mediation program for 	
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	students.	
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Transformation SIG Required Activity – 8 Providing operational flexibility and sustained support. The LEA must (a) give the school sufficient operational flexibility (such as staffing, calendars/ time, and budgeting) to implement fully a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student achievement outcomes and increase high school graduation rates; and (b) ensure that the school receives ongoing, intensive technical assistance and related support from the LEA, the SEA, or a designated external lead partner organization (such as a school turnaround organization or an EMO).		
Implementation Guidance – N/A		
Evidence of Implementation Indicators	Implementation Description	Timeline
1. The LEA has systems and processes for anticipating and addressing school staffing and instructional and operational needs in timely, efficient, and effective ways.	<p>As written in the draft MOU between BRICK and NPS a board will be created to oversee the turnaround efforts of BRICK Avon Academy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BRICK Advisory Board. BRICK and NPS will cooperate to form an advisory board comprised of representatives from BRICK, BRICK School(s) administrators, and NPS. The Advisory Board will act as the shared decision making body; specifically in the areas of accountability and leadership, between BRICK and NPS under this MOU. <p>It is at this meeting that all concerns regarding staffing, instructional and operations would be brought to the table. As problems are raised solutions and next steps should be discussed to ensure needs are met in a timely, efficient and effective way.</p> <p>Also, at the school level the School Operations Manager will conduct school department meetings where a representative from each group will come and voice any concerns or praise regarding the operations of the</p>	September 2011 – June 2014

	<p>school. This meeting will occur monthly at the school level. In addition, as piloted this year on the 1st of each month a teacher supply request form is sent to all staff members seeking what needs to be met. This is to ensure that we are giving the practitioners all the support they need to help build responsible intelligent and creative kids.</p>	
2. The LEA cultivates a pipeline of school transformation leaders, as well as external providers.	<p>The LEA will follow the recommendations of the NJ Educator Effectiveness Task Force. In particular the LEA will actively promote and develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher education pathways among staff; • Professional Learning Communities within and across turnaround schools; • Peer Assistance models; • Teacher internships. 	September 2011 – June 2014
3. The LEA has established annual goals for student achievement.	<p>The LEA will establish annual goals for student achievement. These goals will be disaggregated by grade level and sub-groups, including boys and girls. They have to be established in consideration of the point each student is starting from (value added model) in order to be fair to both the students and the teacher. This puts real progress into its proper context.</p> <p>These school and grade-level goals will be shared with all staff and stakeholders.</p> <p>The Data Team will then support staff, during PLC sessions, to develop achievement and learning goals for every class and each student.</p> <p>In addition, the LEA will work in conjunction with the BRICK Avon Academy administration to have teachers set challenging, meaningful and measurable goals for their classrooms.</p>	September 2011 – June 2014
4. The LEA has ongoing diagnostic programs in place to assess annual goals for student learning and effective practice.	<p>The LEA and BRICK acknowledge that the school should constantly focus on one simple question: are our students learning? Thus, the LEA and BRICK have designed a robust data system that will inform teachers of their students' progress and empower the school and parents to implement interventions to help students succeed.</p> <p><u>1st Stage</u></p> <p>At the beginning of the year, all students complete diagnostic testing to determine areas of strength and areas in need of development. Diagnostic testing is divided into three categories: K–2, 3–5 and 6–8.</p> <p>Kindergarten to Second Grade:</p>	September 2011 – June 2014

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STEP (<i>Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress</i>) will be used as a diagnostic and for interim assessments throughout the year for both reading and writing. Third grade students will also use STEP throughout the year. • For math, a BRICK Avon Academy Diagnostic will be developed and administered to gauge mastery of previous grade's skills and knowledge. <p>Third Grade to Fifth Grade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholastic Reading Inventory(SRI) will be used as a diagnostic for reading comprehension. • Slosson word recognition assessment will be used to gauge word recognition. • McLeod Cloze Passage assessment will be given to gauge reading comprehension. • For writing, students will complete a speculative and explanatory writing prompt. • For math, a BRICK Avon Academy Diagnostic will be developed and administered to gauge mastery of previous grade's skills and knowledge. • For science, a BRICK Avon Academy Diagnostic will be developed and administered to gauge mastery of previous grade's skills and knowledge. <p>Sixth Grade to Eighth Grade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRI will be used as a diagnostic for reading comprehension. These results will determine which students are prioritized for Read 180. • For writing, students will complete a speculative and explanatory (persuasive) writing prompt. • For math, a BRICK Avon Academy Diagnostic will be developed and administered to gauge mastery of previous grade's skills and knowledge. • For science, a BRICK Avon Academy Diagnostic will be developed and administered to gauge mastery of previous grade's skills and knowledge. • For social studies, a BRICK Avon Academy Diagnostic will be developed and administered to gauge mastery of previous grade's skills and knowledge. <p><u>2nd Stage</u></p> <p>Interim Assessments</p> <p>Four times throughout the year, BRICK Avon Academy students take benchmark assessments (A, B, C, D) to gauge mastery of previously taught knowledge and skills. The results of the benchmark assessments are used to plan next steps in the instructional program.</p>	
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	<p>Benchmark assessments are divided into three categories: K–2, 3–5 and 6–8.</p> <p>Kindergarten to Second Grade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STEP will be used for all four interim assessments in reading and writing. • NJPASS will be used for Interim B and Interim D in second grade reading, writing and math and Interim D in first grade reading, writing and math. • For math, BRICK Avon Academy Interim A, B, C, D assessment will be developed and administered to gauge mastery of previously taught skills and knowledge when NJPASS is not being utilized for math. <p>Third Grade to Fifth Grade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark assessments A, B, C and D will be utilized for reading, writing and math in Grades 3–5. • For science, Grade 4 will take benchmark assessments A, B, C and third grade will take Interim D. • Third grade will take STEP during benchmark assessments A, B, C and D. • Scholastic Reading Inventory, Slosson and McLeod will be given mid–year to fourth and fifth graders and third graders who have tested out of STEP. <p>Sixth Grade to Eighth Grade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark Assessments A, B, C and D will be utilized reading, writing, social studies, science and math in Grades 6–8. • SRI will be administered mid–year to all sixth, seventh and eighth grade students. <p><u>Third Stage</u></p> <p>Final Assessments</p> <p>For most grades and subject areas, benchmark assessment D is used as the final assessment. The results of the Final Assessments are used to measure student growth from the beginning of the year and to identify strengths and weaknesses in the academic program. Teachers use the results to plan the following year’s instruction and plan for personal professional development. In addition to benchmark assessment D, the following final assessments are divided into three categories: K–2, 3–5 and 6–8.</p> <p>Kindergarten to Second Grade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten students will be evaluated on a Habits 	
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	<p>checklist in reading and writing.</p> <p>Third Grade to Fifth Grade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For reading, fourth and fifth grade students will complete the Scholastic Reading Inventory, Slosson and McLeod. • For writing, third, fourth and fifth grade students will complete a speculative and explanatory writing prompt. Fourth and fifth graders will complete the High Frequency Word Final. • For math, all third, fourth and fifth grade students will complete the BRICK Avon Academy Final Exam. • For science, all fourth and fifth grade students will complete the BRICK Avon Academy Final Exam. <p>Sixth Grade to Eighth Grade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For reading, sixth, seventh and eighth grade students will complete the Scholastic Reading Inventory. • For writing, sixth, seventh and eighth grade students will complete a speculative and explanatory writing prompt. • For math, all sixth, seventh and eighth grade students will complete the BRICK Avon Academy Final Exam. • For science, all sixth, seventh and eighth grade students will complete the BRICK Avon Academy Final Exam • For social studies, all sixth, seventh and eighth grade students will complete the BRICK Avon Academy Final Exam <p>Summative Unit Assessments</p> <p>Upon completion of a unit of inquiry or a stand-alone unit, students may take a summative assessment to demonstrate mastery of knowledge and skills taught during the unit. These summative assessments are determined prior to the start of the unit and could be either formal or informal. Teachers may determine a written assessment is best to gauge mastery. Teachers may also determine that a group project or performance assessment (see below) would be a better assessment tool to determine student mastery. Despite the summative assessment tool used, all grade level teachers are expected to gauge student mastery using identical assessments.</p> <p>Performance Assessments</p> <p>In some cases, teachers may decide students can demonstrate recently acquired knowledge and skills by</p>	
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	<p>completing a performance task. These performance tasks could include, but are not limited to, completing an individual or group project, open ended tasks or self-selected activities.</p> <p>Formative Assessments</p> <p>BRICK Avon Academy teachers utilize assessments administered daily, weekly and/or monthly. These ongoing assessments follow students as they learn knowledge and skills over time and teachers use the results to plan the next day's lesson or make adjustments to unit and lesson plans. Formative assessments could include anecdotal notes, weekly quizzes, daily exit slips, in-class tasks and some pieces of homework.</p> <p>NJASK and NJPASS</p> <p>The State of New Jersey uses the NJASK to determine grade appropriate knowledge and skills in reading, writing and science. BRICK Avon Academy teachers embrace the NJASK as one piece of a large assessment puzzle. To this end, BRICK Avon Academy teachers use the NJASK as the model for grade level assessment and use the assessed knowledge and skills to plan appropriate units and lessons to ensure students have the opportunity to succeed on the test. Strong planning and instruction will lead to success on the NJASK for all students. In addition, students in Grades 1–2 will take the NJPASS.</p>	
<p>5. The LEA and school share student progress data with parents and students.</p>	<p>Students will be aware of their achievements by reflecting on data contained in individual student portfolios, Data walls in classrooms, and ongoing discussions with their personal learning mentors.</p> <p>Parents will be introduced to the student progress data at an initial meeting at the start of the academic year.</p> <p>This will be followed by invitations to participate in the Parent University, which will provide a series of planned activities throughout the year to assist parents to understand what their children are learning, how they are learning and the progress they are making.</p> <p>The school Report Cards will include formative assessment data (reading levels, benchmark exams, unit assessments).</p> <p>Parent Conferences will be mandated for all students four times a year. These conferences will be offered at different times of the day, and for parents who are house-bound or otherwise unable to attend school the</p>	<p>September 2011 – June 2014</p>

	<p>school will either undertake home visits or provide the information using conference calls.</p> <p>In addition, PowerSchool allows parents, to check on their child's attendance, find out what homework assignments were given, confirm what assignments were handed in, and view their child's grades as they exist in the teacher's grade book in real-time. Parents can also track the formative progress of their child's performance on state standards and school benchmark exams.</p>	
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Transformation SIG Permissible Activity: A transformation model may also implement other strategies.		
Implementation Guidance The LEA may also implement other strategies for providing operational flexibility and intensive support, such as— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Allowing the school to be run under a new governance arrangement, such as a turnaround division within the LEA or SEA; or b) Implementing a per-pupil school-based budget formula that is weighted based on 		
Evidence of Implementation Indicators	Implementation Description	Timeline
New governance arrangement	<p>As pointed out throughout this SIG grant application, NPS has entered into a partnership with Building Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids. The purpose of this partnership was to create a school that would be ranked as an International Knowledge School. BRICK has been working in collaboration with NPS to change the academic outcomes of the students who attend BRICK Avon Academy. BRICK and NPS desire to create an educational program for the children of Newark that will utilize the educational services provided by BRICK and that will be based on trust, mutual respect, common educational objectives and clear accountability.</p> <p>The draft MOU between BRICK and NPS allows for BRICK to operate within a different governance structure that will allow the school to be innovative in addressing the varying needs of the students who attend BRICK Avon Academy.</p>	September 2010 – June 2014

Transformation SIG Required Activity – 9

Establish a system to collect data for the required leading indicators for schools receiving SIG funds.

Implementation Guidance

The nine metrics that constitute the leading indicators for the SIG program include (1) the number of minutes within the school year, (2) student participation rate on state assessments in reading/language arts and in mathematics by student subgroup, (3) dropout rate, (4) student attendance rate, (5) number and percentage of students completing advanced coursework (e.g., AP/IB, early-college high schools, or dual enrollment classes), (6) discipline incidents, (7) truants, (8) distribution of teachers by performance level on an LEA's evaluation system, and (9) teacher attendance rate.

Evidence of Implementation Indicators	Implementation Description	Timeline
1. The SEA has established a process to collect and analyze data, preferably at key points during the year so the SEA may provide support to help the LEA and school make needed corrections.	<p>The LEA has established processes and procedures to collect and analyze data at various key points during the year. The school and its external lead partner will be required to produce quarterly reports on progress against all nine leading indicators and the respective success criteria. These reports will highlight key successes and areas for development.</p> <p>The school will also report the results of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnostic Assessments given in August; • K–5 benchmark exams in math, writing and reading given three times throughout the year; • 6–8 benchmark exams in math, social studies, science, writing and reading given three times throughout the year; • Summative Assessment for math, ELA, social studies and science in June. 	September 2011 – June 2014
2. The LEA and school have established a data system that can collect and report information on all nine leading indicators.	The LEA and the school have data systems in place which allow for the collection and transfer of data and the production of report information on all nine leading indicators.	September 2011 – June 2014

Form S-7

Date: _____

Page ____ of ____

ANNUAL STUDENT TARGETS

LEA : _Newark Public Schools_____

Name of School: Avon Avenue _____

GRADE SPAN & SUBGROUP	LANGUAGE ARTS					MATHEMATICS				
For Each Grade Span: __3-5__	State Assessment	Baseline	2012 Target	2013 Target	2014 Target	State Assessment	Baseline	2012 Target	2013 Target	2014 Target
Total Students	State Assessment	14%	23%	31%	38%	State Assessment	28%	35.2%	41.7%	47.7%
Students with Disabilities	State Assessment					State Assessment				
Limited English Proficient Students	State Assessment					State Assessment				
White	State Assessment					State Assessment				
African-American	State Assessment	14%	23%	31%	38%	State Assessment	30%	36%	42.4%	47.9%
Asian/Pacific Islander	State Assessment					State Assessment				
American Indian/Native American	State Assessment					State Assessment				
Hispanic	State Assessment					State Assessment				
Others	State Assessment					State Assessment				
Economically Disadvantaged	State Assessment	13%	22%	31%	38%	State Assessment	21%	28.9%	36%	42.4%

Form S-9**Use only one model template for each school.****Date:** April 7, 2011**Page** **of** **PROJECT ACTIVITY PLAN – TRANSFORMATION****LEA :** Newark PS**Name of School:** BRICK Avon

SIG Required Activity – 1 Transformation		Replace the principal who led the school prior to commencement of the transformation model.						
SMART Goal:		1.1.A The principal who led the school prior to commencement of the transformation model has been replaced						
Indicators of Success:		1.1.A The principal who led the school prior to commencement of the transformation model has been replaced 1.1.B.The school has a new principal, who has been in place for less than a year 1.1.C The new principal has the skills and attributes to be a transformational leader						
SBR Practice to Address Goal:		<i>NJ Educator Effectiveness Task Force, 2011</i> <i>Achievement through Teaching Excellence: NPS,2010</i> <i>Educational Leadership Policy Standards, ISSLC</i> <i>Accomplished Principal Standards, National Board</i> <i>Evaluation of the School Administration Manager Project, Brenda J. Turnbull, M. Bruce Haslam et al. (2009)</i>						
Description of Action Steps		Person(s) Responsible	Resources (List all items from budget with page #)	Documentation	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1	Previous principal replaced	Superintendent / BRICK		Letter of transfer / separation	Δ			
2	New principal appointed	Superintendent / BRICK		Letter of appointment	Δ			
3	The new principal was selected in a fair and transparent manner	Superintendent / BRICK		Assessment process	Δ			

4	The new principal has the skills and attributes to be a transformational leader	Superintendent / BRICK		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • Principal evaluation 	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
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SIG Required Activity – 2 Transformation		Use rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation systems for teachers and principals that (a) take into account data on student growth as a significant factor, as well as other factors, such as multiple observation-based assessments of performance and ongoing collections of professional practice reflective of student achievement and increased high school graduation rates; and (b) are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement.						
SMART Goal:		The proportion of teaching that is judged to be proficient or distinguished will be 75% by July 2012						
Indicators of Success:		1. Teachers will know what behaviors, practices and results are expected and by what metrics they will be evaluated. 2. Results from multiple classroom observations, internal and external test scores, student progress and classroom surveys will delineate strengths and weaknesses and provide a path for improvement through a modified PD plan						
SBR Practice to Address Goal:		<i>NJ Educator Effectiveness Task Force, 2011</i> <i>Achievement through Teaching Excellence: NPS, 2010</i> <i>Educational Leadership Policy Standards, ISSLC</i> <i>Accomplished Principal Standards, National Board</i> <i>The Art and Science of Teaching, Robert J. Marzano</i> <i>Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching, 2nd Edition (2007), Charlotte Danielson</i> <i>Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Project, December 2010</i>						
Description of Action Steps		Person(s) Responsible	Resources (List all items from budget with page #)	Documentation	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1	Provide training for administrators, coaches, peer-reviewers and key district staff in Effective Classroom Observation	Superintendent / BRICK	LAL Coach Math Coach	PD program PD evaluation	Δ			
2	Training for independent evaluators	Outside provider		PD program	Δ			
3	Schedule training dates.	Superintendent / BRICK		PD Calendar Meeting minutes	Δ			
4	Mentored classroom observations and walkthroughs to calibrate the use of the metrics	Administration Outside provider		Achievement through Teaching Excellence: NPS	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ

5	Schedule of classroom walkthroughs and informal observations.	Administration		Walkthrough schedule Lesson Observation reports	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
6	Evaluation of student performance data—summative and formative.	Administration Coaches Grade Level Leaders Department Chairs		Student performance data files Student performance evaluation reports	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
7	Use of classroom survey tool to triangulate students' view of teacher effectiveness with observations and data sets	Superintendent /BRICK		Classroom survey reports Analysis of classroom surveys	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
8	Develop a transparent committee to design and develop procedures and protocols for evaluation staff at BRICK Avon Academy	Superintendent BRICK NTU Administration Teachers		Committee Notes			Δ	Δ
9	Develop partnership with various organizations to study and reference their evaluation tools	Superintendent BRICK NTU Administration		Sample Evaluation tools Email correspondents			Δ	Δ
10	Provide training for administrators and coaches to create norms regarding the evaluation process	BRICK Administration		PD Evaluation PD Agenda			Δ	Δ
11	Create a subcommittee of the BRICK Advisory Board to periodically assess the quality and usefulness of the	Superintendent BRICK		Committee Minutes Committee Assignment		Δ	Δ	Δ

	evaluation process							
12	Monitor the evaluation process at each quarter at the BRICK Advisory Board	Superintendent BRICK Administration		Board Minutes	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ

SIG Required Activity – 3 Transformation		Identify and reward school leaders, teachers, and other staff who, in implementing this model, have increased student achievement and high school graduation rates, and identify and remove those who have not improved their professional practice after having been afforded ample opportunity to do so.						
SMART Goal:		100% school leaders, teachers, and other staff are evaluated on an annual basis using a performance review based on a transparent system, which enables the identification and reward of school leaders, teachers, and other staff who have met the agreed criteria and the removal of those who have not improved their professional practice						
Indicators of Success:		<p>1. All school leaders, teachers and other staff, are evaluated on an annual basis using a performance review based on a transparent system</p> <p>2. All school leaders, teachers and other staff, who have implemented this model and increased student achievement have been identified and rewarded.</p> <p>2. All school leaders, teacher and other staff, who have not improves their professional practice, after having been afforded ample opportunity to do so, have been identified and removed</p>						
SBR Practice to Address Goal:		<p><i>NJ Educator Effectiveness Task Force, 2011</i> <i>Educational Leadership Policy Standards, ISSLC</i> <i>Accomplished Principal Standards, National Board</i> <i>Principal Effectiveness: A New Principalship to Drive Student Achievement, Teacher Effectiveness, and School Turnarounds with Key Insights from the UEFTM</i> by New Leaders for New Schools, 2009 <i>The Art and Science of Teaching, Robert J. Marzano</i> <i>Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching, 2nd Edition</i> (2007), Charlotte Danielson</p>						
Description of Action Steps		Person(s) Responsible	Resources (List all items from budget with page #)	Documentation	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1	Agree to a transparent system of Performance Evaluation for all school leaders	Superintendent BRICK	Lead Turnaround Partner	School leaders' performance evaluation	Δ	Δ		
2	Agree to a system of rewards and incentives for school leaders	Superintendent BRICK	Lead Turnaround Partner	School leader rewards and incentives	Δ	Δ		
3	Agree to transparent processes and procedures for the removal of school leaders	Superintendent BRICK	Lead Turnaround Partner	Inefficiency change process	Δ		Δ	

	who have not improved their professional practice							
4	Implement in full the agreed performance evaluation system for all school leaders	Regional Superintendent BRICK	Lead Turnaround Partner	School leader performance evaluation records	Δ	Δ		
5	Ensure that all school leaders receive an annual summative evaluation statement which incorporates the data gathered throughout the year.	Regional Superintendent BRICK	Supplemental Pay Lead Turnaround Partner	School leader annual evaluation statements	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
6	Ensure that all school leaders who have improved their professional practice and increased student achievement are rewarded	Superintendent BRICK	Lead Turnaround Partner	Statements of school leader annual rewards and incentives				Δ
7	Ensure that any school leaders who have not improved their professional practice are removed	Superintendent BRICK	Lead Turnaround Partner	School leader retention and removal records				
8	Agree to a transparent system of Performance Evaluation for all teachers and other staff	Superintendent BRICK Administration	Lead Turnaround Partner	Achievement Through Teaching Excellence				Δ
9	Agree to a system of	Superintendent BRICK	Lead Turnaround	Achievement Through	Δ	Δ		

	rewards and incentives for all teachers and other staff	Administration	Partner	Teaching Excellence				
10	Agree to transparent processes and procedures for the removal of teachers and other staff who have not improved their professional practice	Superintendent BRICK Administration	Lead Turnaround Partner	Inefficiency teacher change process	Δ		Δ	
11	Implement in full the agreed performance evaluation system for all teachers and other staff	Administration		Teacher and other staff performance evaluation records	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
12	Ensure that all teachers and other staff, receive an annual summative evaluation statement which incorporates the data gathered throughout the year	Administration		Teacher and other staff annual evaluation statements				Δ
13	Ensure that all teachers and other staff who have improved their professional practice and increased student achievement are rewarded	Superintendent / BRICK Administration	Lead Turnaround Partner	Statements of teacher and other staff annual rewards and incentives				Δ
14	Ensure that any teacher and other staff who	Superintendent / BRICK HR Department	Lead Turnaround Partner	Teacher and other staff School leader				Δ

	have not improved their professional practice are removed			retention and removal records				
15	Provide additional pay for staff members who participate in extending learning	Superintendent / BRICK HR Department	Supplemental Pay	Teacher supplemental timesheets	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
16	Create a system to award staff members with incentives such as: designated parking space, leaving early Friday and certificates	Administration		Staff meeting minutes Pictures	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
17	Post, Recruit, Hire quality individuals the support the model implementation	Superintendent BRICK HR Department Administration	Math / LAL Coaches Crisis Teacher Reading Specialists Math Specialists Behavioral Specialist Guidance Counselor	Job positing Appointment letters	Δ			
18	Partner with the Montclair Urban Teacher Residency to place prospective teachers at BRICK Avon Academy	Superintendent BRICK Montclair Administration	Lead Turnaround Partner	Agreement letter Appointment letters	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
19	Partner with Teacher For America– Newark to place teachers at BRICK Avon	Superintendent BRICK TFA – Newark Administration	Lead Turnaround Partner	Agreement letter Appointment letters	Δ			Δ

	Academy							
20	Seek additional University partners to place high quality individuals at BRICK Avon Academy	Superintendent BRICK	Lead Turnaround Partner	Agreement letters	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ

SIG Required Activity – 4 Transformation		Provide staff ongoing, high–quality, job–embedded professional development (PD) that is aligned with the school’s comprehensive instructional program and designed with school staff to ensure they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and have the capacity to successfully implement school reform strategies.						
SMART Goal:		All teachers report PD is differentiated based on teacher experience and needs						
Indicators of Success:		1. Classroom observations indicate an increase in the quality of teaching and student s are more engaged in learning 2. Teachers’ formative assessments have positive impact on planning and learning for individual students, 3. Increase in student satisfaction survey results following embedded PD. 4. The rate of behavioral referrals declines 5. Technology–based supports and interventions are seen as integral elements during all classroom observations						
SBR Practice to Address Goal:		<i>The Art and Science of Teaching</i> , Robert J. Marzano <i>Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching, 2nd Edition</i> (2007), Charlotte Danielson International						
Description of Action Steps		Person(s) Responsible	Resources (List all items from budget with page #)	Documentation	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4
1	Develop a comprehensive plan and regular schedule of differentiated/sc hool focused PD based on survey of teachers’ needs and classroom observations	Instructional Leader Assistant Principal Grade Level Leaders Department leaders Instructional Coaches		School PD plan PD program PD Evaluations	Δ		Δ	
2	LEA provide PD that equips teachers with competencies needed to apply evidence and standards based practices effectively	LEA Outside Provider	Math Coach LAL Coach	School PD plan PD program PD Evaluations	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
3	Provide a teacher summer institute to prepare for the school year.	LEA	Math Coach LAL Coach School Operations Manager	PD Evaluations	Δ			

	Teachers will be trained on school wide data systems, map power standards and create in-house benchmark exams							
4	Enhance the role and function of the grade level meetings (K-5) and department meetings (6-8) to further promote data driven instruction	Grade Level Leaders Department Leaders	Math Coach LAL Coach	Terms of reference for Grade level and Department meeting	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
5	Provide opportunities for regular peer observations based on evaluation of skills by administrators and scrutiny of data	Assistant Principal Instructional Coaches	Math Coach LAL Coach	Peer review schedule Observations forms	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
6	On-going staff development on formative assessment (Assessment for Learning) and differentiated instruction	Outside Provider	Math Coach LAL Coach Math Interventionists LAL Interventionists PD Providers	PD program PD Evaluations	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
7	Relevant and ongoing staff development for all staff in reading and writing in all subject areas aligned to language arts	Literacy coach Reading specialist, Administration	Math Coach LAL Coach	PD program PD Evaluations	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ

8	Staff development on Literacy across the curriculum strategies for all staff	Literacy coach Reading specialist	Math Coach LAL Coach	PD program PD Evaluations				
9	Review samples of student work to provide teachers with feedback to improve the quality of instruction	Literacy coach Grade level leaders Department leaders	Math Coach LAL Coach	PD program PD Evaluations		Δ	Δ	Δ
10	Promoting Positive Behavior Strategies – classroom management	Outside Provider	Guidance Counselor Behavioral Specialist	PD program PD Evaluations Behavioral incidents log	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
11	Advisory programs to promote social and emotional skills	Outside Provider	Guidance Counselor Behavioral Specialist	PD program PD Evaluations Student interviews	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
12	Promoting student motivation for learning – classroom management	Outside Provider	Guidance Counselor Behavioral Specialist Crisis Teacher	PD program PD Evaluations Classroom survey results	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
13	Using and integrating technology–based supports and interventions as part of the instructional program	Outside Provider	Math Coach LAL Coach	PD program PD Evaluations Lesson Plans	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
14	On–going staff development on newly implemented curriculum	Outside Provider	Math Coach LAL Coach	PD program PD Evaluations Lesson Plans	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
15	Adopt and use a scope and sequence rubric to track, support,	Superintendent BRICK Administration	BRICK Administration Lead	Rubric Tracker	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ

	and measure the instructional changes in each teacher.		turnaround partner					
16	Provide training to administration on the teacher effectiveness rubric	BRICK Administration	Math Coach LAL Coach Lead turnaround partner	PD program PD Evaluations	Δ			
17	Create a schedule that will follow the planning and preparation plan to give teachers 3 hours of Grade Level Team collaboration and one 45-minute planning period.	Administration	Math Coach LAL Coach	Master Schedule	Δ			
18	Select an outside PD provider and vet applications against agreed criteria.	Superintendent BRICK Administration	Math Coach LAL Coach Lead turnaround partner	Selection process Contract	Δ			

SIG Required Activity – 5 Transformation		Implement strategies that are designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in a transformation model.						
SMART Goal:		All recruits are HQT with experience and expertise in the urban setting, HQT are retained and staff who are not meeting the needs of the students are transferred						
Indicators of Success:		1. 100% of all recruits are HQT 2. All recruits, including beginning teachers have experience and expertise in working in urban setting 3. All HQT are retained, except for any who retire, or gain promotion or an leadership position 4. All eligible staff who are not meeting the needs of the students are transferred out						
SBR Practice to Address Goal:		<i>The Art and Science of Teaching</i> , Robert J. Marzano <i>Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching</i> , 2nd Edition (2007), Charlotte Danielson International						
Description of Action Steps		Person(s) Responsible	Resources (List all items from budget with page #)	Documentation	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1	Develop hiring procedures and budget lines to support recruitment and hiring of high quality teachers	Superintendent BRICK Administration	Lead Turnaround Partner	Recruitment policy and procedures	Δ			
2.	Establish positions which enable the school to transform the faculty structure	Executive Director BRICK Administration	Lead Turnaround Partner	Faculty structure	Δ			
3	Implement a valid, fair and transparent method for deciding on performance expectations	Executive Director BRICK Administration	Lead Turnaround Partner	Performance Management	Δ	Δ		
4	Develop a performance related incentive scale that includes student achievement and classroom related measures	Superintendent BRICK Administration	Lead Turnaround Partner	Performance Management	Δ	Δ		
5	Develop a valid, transparent method for deciding whether criteria for performance based	Superintendent BRICK Administration	Lead Turnaround Partner	Performance Management	Δ	Δ		

	incentives have been met							
6	SEA, LEA and BRICK develop an performance based incentive system in partnership with teachers' unions and other relevant stakeholders	Superintendent BRICK Administration Teacher's Union	Lead Turnaround Partner	Performance – based incentives	Δ	Δ		
7	LEA and school to provide targeted assistance to under-performing teachers	Superintendent BRICK Principal	Lead Turnaround Partner	LEA HR policy School HR Policy	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
8	Develop and implement policies and procedures for performance based dismissals	Superintendent BRICK Principal Teachers' Union	Lead Turnaround Partner	LEA HR policy School HR Policy	Δ	Δ		
9	Follow BRICK protocols for choosing and appointing new staff members	Superintendent BRICK Administration Teachers' Union	Lead Turnaround Partner	BRICK evaluation rubric	Δ			

SIG Required Activity – 6 Transformation		Comprehensive instructional reform strategies. The LEA must (a) use data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned from one grade to the next, as well as aligned with state academic standards; and (b) promote the continuous use of student data (such as from formative, interim, classroom, and summative assessments) to inform and differentiate instruction in order to meet the academic needs of individual students.						
SMART Goal:		A wide range of student data is used to identify and implement a research based instructional program which is vertically aligned as well as aligned with the state academic standards						
Indicators of Success:		1.The school uses data to identify instructional programs 2.All instructional programs are research– based and are aligned with state academic standards 3.The school has well developed pacing guides which ensure alignment across all grade levels 4. Classroom observations and scrutiny of student work clearly demonstrate that staff are using data to inform and differentiate instruction in order to meet the acacia needs of individual students						
SBR Practice to Address Goal:		<i>The Art and Science of Teaching</i> , Robert J. Marzano <i>Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching, 2nd Edition</i> (2007), Charlotte Danielson <i>Beyond the Numbers: Making Data Work for Teachers & School Leaders</i> , Stephen White						
Description of Action Steps		Person(s) Responsible	Resources (List all items from budget with page #)	Documentation	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1	Teacher read and analyze <i>Driven by Data: A Practical Guide to Improve Instruction</i> to create a common language of a data informed instructional program	Teachers Administrators Grade leaders Department leaders	Math Coach LAL Coach Data Books Coordinator Pay	Teacher's learning logs Minutes of PLC meetings	Δ			
2	Teachers use the Instructional Cycle to determine multiple forms of formative and summative assessments for	Grade leaders Department leaders	Math Coach LAL Coach Coordinator Pay	BRICK Instructional Cycle	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ

	each unit							
3	Teachers utilize School Net to track interim assessment data	Teachers Grade leaders Department leaders	Math Coach LAL Coach Coordinator Pay	Teacher data files School Net	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
4	PD provided to ensure that schools use data to drive instructional change both at grade level and vertically across the grades	BRICK Grade leaders Department leaders	Math Coach LAL Coach Lead Turnaround partner Coordinator Pay	PD program PD Evaluations Lesson Plans	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
5	PD provided to ensure teachers have a good understanding of differentiation	Grade leaders Department leaders	Math Coach LAL Coach Coordinator Pay	Lesson Plans Classroom observations	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
6	Create school based benchmark exams for Grades K–8	Grade leaders Department Leaders Administration	Math Coach LAL Coach Coordinator Pay	BRICK Instructional Cycle	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
7	The school incorporates a developmental literacy assessment, instructional tool, and data management system for Grades K–3	Grade leaders Administration Teachers	LAL Coach Reading Interventionists Coordinator Pay	Diagnostic Data On-going data Lesson Plans PD Program Classroom observations	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
8	The school incorporates a reading intervention program for Grades 4–8 (READ 180)	Grade leaders Administration Teachers Department leaders	LAL Coach Reading Interventionists Coordinator Pay	Selection of program On-going data analysis of program Students placements in RTI	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
9	Purchase necessary materials to implement READ 180 program	School Operations Manager	Computers Rbooks Tables Security Devices Computer	Requisitions	Δ			

			Chairs Power Upgrade Internet Upgrade					
10	The school incorporates a math program that concentrates on fewer topics taught in greater depth with an intervention component	Teachers Administrators Grade leaders Department leaders	Math Coach Math Interventionists Coordinator Pay	Selection of program On-going data analysis of program Students placements in RTI	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
11	Teachers track student data and use this to promote personalized learning for all students by creating a “BRICK Plan”	Teachers Administrators Grade leaders Department leaders	Math Coach LAL Coach Math Interventionists LAL Interventionists Grade Level Coordinator Pay Supplemental Pay	Teacher data files Lesson Plans Classroom observations	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
12	Teachers use the data inputted into the “Mastery Tracker” to inform instructional cycle	Teachers Administrators Grade leaders Department leaders	Math Coach LAL Coach Coordinator Pay	Mastery file Lesson Plans Classroom observations	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
13	Provide interactive web-based online programs for tier two and three. Programs that are geared toward providing interventions to students	Teachers Administrators Grade leaders Department leaders	Math Coach LAL Coach Computers Tables Security Devices Computer Chairs Internet Connectivity Coordinator Pay	Program selection On-going data from program use	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
14	Create a mastery tracker	Data Coach Grade Leaders	Coordinator Pay	Tracker	Δ			

	for student mastery	Department Leaders						
15	Select a strong intervention math program that would be tailored toward tier two and three	Teachers Administrators	Math Coach Computers Tables Security Devices Computer Chairs Internet Connectivity	Program selection	Δ			
16	Plan a summer institute to prepare all staff members to be fully prepared for the school year	Superintendent BRICK Administration	Math Coach LAL Coach Behavioral Specialist Guidance Counselor School Operations Manager Coordinator Pay Supplemental Pay	Institute Agenda PD Evaluation	Δ			
17	Create an assessment calendar for the entire school	Superintendent BRICK Administration Data Coach	Math Coach LAL Coach Behavioral Specialist Guidance Counselor School Operations Manager	Assessment Calendar	Δ			
18	Purchase technology – base supports and interventions as part of the instructional program and provide professional development on supports	School Operations Manager	School Operations Manager Computers Tables Security Devices Computer Chairs Internet Connectivity SMART Board PD Provider	Requisitions PD Evaluations	Δ			

SIG Permissible Activity – 6 Transformation		Staff and students will work with an expanded repertoire of current technologies, software, hardware and internet-based capabilities that will be seamlessly integrated in learning experiences in the school, classrooms, and student's homes.						
SMART Goal:		Starting at a baseline of zero by year 2013 100% of staff members will use certain elements of technology (Smartboards, Wikis, Podcast, Global Project, Skype, etc) to enhance their instruction: School Climate Survey.						
Indicators of Success:		1. Students are excited about using technology 2. Teachers use technology to teach certain techniques enhancing their instruction 3. Administrators will see technology being used during walkthroughs 4. Students will talk about technology in their normal conversations						
SBR Practice to Address Goal:		<i>Organizing Instruction and Study to Improve Student Learning (2007)</i> , U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION <i>Interactive Whiteboards and Learning (2006)</i> , SMART Technologies Inc.						
Description of Action Steps		Person(s) Responsible	Resources (List all items from budget with page #)	Documentation	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1	Incorporate technology into instruction of the classroom	Teacher Administrators Grade leaders Department leaders	Computers Math Coach LAL Coach Security Devices Tables Power Upgrade Internet Connectivity	Data from programs Observations	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
2.	Provide online based education programs for students who need additional remediation and for advanced students (differentiation) Tier two and three students	Teachers Administrators Grade leaders Coaches Department leaders	Computers Math Coach LAL Coach Power Upgrade Security Devices Tables Internet Connectivity	On line programs On line logs Evidence of student progress	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
3	Provide initial professional development to create basic proficiency in using technology to enhance instruction	Teachers Administrators Outside Provider Department leaders	Computers Math Coach LAL Coach Power Upgrade Internet Connectivity Security Devices	PD Program PD evaluations	Δ			

			Tables					
4	Provide ongoing coaching PD to teachers to incorporate technology into lessons and enhance their instruction	Teachers Administrators Outside Provider Department leaders	Computers Math Coach LAL Coach Power Upgrade Internet Connectivity Security Devices Tables	PD Program PD evaluations		Δ	Δ	Δ
5	Incorporate interactive board to increase student engagement	Instructional Team Administration Operations	Math Coach LAL Coach School Operations Manager Smartboards Internet Connectivity Power Upgrade	Lesson observation reports Student surveys Student focus group reports	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
6	Incorporate digital media and visuals into instruction, thus bridging the achievement gap through improved student engagement and supporting multimedia lesson plans	Instructional Team Administration Operations	Math Coach LAL Coach School Operations Manager Smartboards Internet Connectivity Power Upgrade	Lesson observation reports Scrutiny of student work reports Student surveys	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ

SIG Permissible Activity – 6 Transformation		Response-to-intervention (RTI)						
SMART Goal:		Students placed in tier 2 and tier 3 will receive daily interventions resulting in 100% of students meeting their individualize progress goals as measured by: benchmark exams and standardized test.						
Indicators of Success:		Students articulating personal goals and progressing towards goals Increased student engagement in lessons Increased mastery on benchmark exams						
SBR Practice to Address Goal:		<i>RTI and Math Instruction (2010)</i> , Amanda VanDerHeyden, Ph.D <i>Assisting Students Struggling with Mathematics: Response to Intervention (RtI) for Elementary and Middle Schools</i> , National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance <i>Response to Intervention: A Research Review</i> , Charles Hughes, Ph.D., and Douglas D. Dexter, Ph.D., Penn State University						
Description of Action Steps		Person(s) Responsible	Resources (List all items from budget with page #)	Documentation	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4
1	Implement a universal screening system to identify the strengths and weaknesses of children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading Diagnostics K–3 = STEP 4–8 = SRI, McLeod and Slosson Math Diagnostics K–8 = School created grade level diagnostic and web-based math program Reading ongoing assessments K–3 = STEP 4–8 = SRI, McLeod, 	Teacher Administrators Grade leaders Department leaders	Math Coach LAL Coach Reading Specialist Math Specialist	RTI Flow Chart Diagnostic Data	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ

	and Slosson K–8 = Quarterly benchmarks • Math ongoing assessments K–8 = Quarterly benchmarks K–8 = Web-based program							
2	Place students in tier 2 and tier 3 for interventions	Administrators Coaches	Math Coach LAL Coach Reading Specialist Math Specialist	RTI Flow Chart	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
3	Implement a monitoring system to track the progress of students in the RTI program to ensure students are benefiting from the interventions	Teachers Administrators Grade leaders Coaches Department leaders	Math Coach LAL Coach Reading Specialist Math Specialist	RTI Flow Chart	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
4	Provide initial professional development to create a common language and understanding of Response to Intervention	Teachers Administrators Outside Provider Department leaders	Math Coach LAL Coach Reading Specialist Math Specialist	PD Evaluations	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
5	Provide ongoing coaching PD to teachers, administrations, coaches, and interventionist on RTI	Teachers Administrators Outside Provider Department leaders	Math Coach LAL Coach Reading Specialist Math Specialist	PD Evaluations	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
6	Create an RTI schedule for the K–8 population	Administrators	Math Coach LAL Coach Reading	RTI Flow Chart RTI Schedule	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ

			Specialist Math Specialist					
7	Recruit and hire individuals using the BRICK hiring procedures for the RTI staff members	District BRICK Administrators	Math Coach LAL Coach Reading Specialist Math Specialist	Notification Letters	Δ			
8	Read <i>Response to Intervention, Second Edition</i> to create a common language reading the RTI program	Administration Teachers Guidance Counselor Behaviorists	Math Coach LAL Coach Reading Specialists Math Specialists Guidance Counselor Behaviorist s School Operations Supplemen tal Pay RTI Books	PD Evaluations	Δ			

SIG Required Activity – 7a Transformation		Increasing learning time and creating community-oriented schools. The LEA must (a) establish schedules and strategies that provide increased learning time for all students.						
SMART Goal:		The school has established schedules and strategies that provide well-designed programs that expand learning time by a minimum of 300 hours per school year.						
Indicators of Success:		1.All students are provided with a minimum of 300 hours per school year 2.The established schedule and programs are well-designed and meaningfully expand student learning time						
SBR Practice to Address Goal:		<i>MA Expanded Learning Time Schools Showing Promising Results, 2011</i> MA2020 <i>Time for a change:</i> Farbman, D., & Kaplan, C. (2005). <i>On the clock: Rethinking the way schools use time</i> Silva, E. (2007).						
Description of Action Steps		Person(s) Responsible	Resources (List all items from budget with page #)	Documentation	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4
1	Establish stakeholders committee to review the research on extended learning time	BRICK Administration	Supplemental Pay–teacher Supplemental Pay– Aides Supplemental Pay– Administration Supplemental Pay–Clerk Supplemental Pay–Nurse Lead Turnaround Partner	Committee minutes	Δ			
2	Review and revise the existing school schedule to maximize learning time	Principal Grade Leaders Department Leaders Community rep BRICK	Math Coach LAL Coach School Operations Manager Lead Turnaround Partner	School schedule	Δ			
3	Consult with all stakeholders on the options for extending learning time, in a neighborhood which is relatively unsafe after 4pm	BRICK Principal Community Relations Specialist	Supplemental Pay–teacher Supplemental Pay– Aides Supplemental Pay– Administration Supplemental Pay–Clerk Supplemental Pay–Nurse	Stakeholder meeting sign in sheets Minutes of meeting	Δ			

			Lead Turnaround Partner					
4	Extend the length of the school day for all students in a way which gains support from all stakeholders	BRICK Principal	Supplemental Pay–teacher Supplemental Pay– Aides Supplemental Pay– Administration Supplemental Pay–Clerk Supplemental Pay–Nurse Lead Turnaround Partner	Revised school schedule	Δ			
5	Review the length and pattern of the school year	Principal BRICK Grade Leaders Department Leaders Community rep	Math Coach LAL Coach School Operations Manager Lead Turnaround Partner School Operations Pay	Committee minutes	Δ			
6	Consult with all stakeholders on the options for extending the school year	BRICK Principal Community Relations Specialist	Math Coach LAL Coach School Operations Manager Lead Turnaround Partner	Stakeholder meeting sign in sheets Minutes of meeting	Δ			
7	Extend the length of the school year for all students in a way which gains support from all stakeholders. Options likely to include: • Adding 10 or more days to the		Supplemental Pay–teacher Supplemental Pay– Aides Supplemental Pay– Administration Supplemental Pay–Clerk Supplemental Pay–Nurse	Revised school calendar	Δ			

	school year • Implementing alternate Saturday schools , mornings only for all students • Implementing summer school, morning only for all students							
8	Arrange for buses for Saturday Excursions	School Operations Manager Clerks	Transportation for Saturday Extended Learning Excursions School Operations Manager Pay	Contracts	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
9	Select Saturday Extended Learning trips	Administration Teachers Clerks	Transportation for Saturday Extended Learning Excursions School Operations Manager Math Coach LAL Coach	Admission Receipts Trip paperwork	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
10	Take students on Saturday Extended Learning trips	School Operations Manager Teachers Clerks	Supplemental pay for instructional staff chaperones for Saturday Extended Learning Excursions School Operations Manager LAL Coach Math Coach School Operations Manager Pay	Sign-in sheets	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
11	Provide high	Administration	LAL Coach	PD Evaluations	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ

	quality PD for extended PD days (one a month)	Outside PD provider	Math Coach PD Provider Supplemental pay for instructional staff					
12	Create schedule for summer teacher institute	Administration Outside PD provider	LAL Coach Math Coach PD Provider School Operations Manager	PD Evaluations Schedule	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
13	Notify targeted students who will be attending the BELL summer program	Administration		BELL schedule Parent Letters	Δ			
14	Provide an after school program targeted for tier two students and offered to tier three students	Administration	Math Coach LAL Coach Math Specialists Reading Specialists	After school program Evaluation reports Student feedback	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
15	Provide family– driven programs on a monthly bases	Administration BRICK	Math Coach LAL Coach Counselor Behavioral Specialist Reading Specialist Math Specialist Lead Turnaround Partner	Family programs Evaluation reports Parent feedback	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ

SIG Required Activity – 7b Transformation		Increasing learning time and creating community-oriented schools. The LEA (b) provide ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement.						
SMART Goal:		The school increases the learning time for all students using strategies which create mechanisms for family and community engagement						
Indicators of Success:		1. Students have the opportunity to participate in community-related activities 2. Family and community engagement in the school increases by 10% by the end of 2012						
SBR Practice to Address Goal:		<i>Effective Implementation of School Improvement Grants</i> , Center on Innovation & Improvement. (n.d.). <i>SES Partners for change: Public schools and community-based organizations</i> . Vue, 17. Annenberg Institute for School Reform. Warren, M. R. (2007).						
Description of Action Steps		Person(s) Responsible	Resources (List all items from budget with page #)	Documentation	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1	Review and evaluate existing community-oriented programs provided by the school	BRICK Administration	Lead Turnaround partner	Existing program,	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
2	Undertake stakeholder consultation, including Town Hall meetings, focus groups and surveys	BRICK Administration	Lead Turnaround partner	Meeting schedule Signing in sheets	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
3	Develop and implement opportunities for students to participate in community-related activities	BRICK Administration	Lead Turnaround partner	New program	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
4	Monitor and evaluate, the impact of the community-related activities	BRICK Administration	Lead Turnaround partner	Monitoring report Participants' surveys	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
5	Review and revise the community related activities	BRICK Administration	Lead Turnaround partner	Revised Program	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
6	Develop and implement opportunities to	BRICK Administration	Lead Turnaround partner	New program	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ

	enhance family and community engagement							
7	Monitor and evaluate, the impact of the family and community engagement	BRICK Administration	Lead Turnaround partner	Monitoring report Participants' surveys	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
8	Review and revise the family and community engagement program	BRICK Administration	Lead Turnaround partner	Revised Program	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
9	Notify parents of the Newark Strong Health Communities Initiative (SHCI)	BRICK Administration	Lead Turnaround partner	Parent Letter Sign-In Sheet Parent Night Student Release Forms	Δ			

SIG Required Activity – 8 Transformation		Providing operational flexibility and sustained support. The LEA must (a) give the school sufficient operational flexibility (such as staffing, calendars/ time, and budgeting) to implement fully a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student achievement outcomes and increase high school graduation rates; and (b) ensure that the school receives ongoing, intensive technical assistance and related support from the LEA, the SEA, or a designated external lead partner organization (such as a school turnaround organization or an EMO).						
SMART Goal:		The school gains sufficient operational flexibility to allow it to implement fully the agreed comprehensive transformation approach, including the ability to select its external lead partner organization						
Indicators of Success:		1.The LEA delegates enhanced operational flexibility to the school in the areas of staffing, calendar / time and budgeting 2. A School Operations Manager is hired to handle the operations of the building 3.The school operations manager has the skills and attributes to be a transformational leader 4. School grade level leaders and department leaders are appointed prior to August 5. The school grade level leaders and department leaders have the skills and attributed to be transformational leaders 6. A school governance council established 7. The school governance council meets on a monthly basis to discuss whole school matters 8The school selects an external lead partner organization 9The external lead partner organization provides high quality technical assistance 10The LEA, the school and the external lead partner work collaboratively to substantially improve student achievement outcomes						
SBR Practice to Address Goal:								
Description of Action Steps		Person(s) Responsible	Resources (List all items from budget with page #)	Documentation	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1	The LEA and the school work in partnership to develop LEA's systems and processes	Superintendent BRICK Principal	Lead Turnaround partner	LEA systems and processes	Δ			
2	The LEA systems for anticipating and addressing school staffing	Superintendent BRICK	Lead Turnaround partner	LEA HR procedures LEA budget timelines Stakeholder	Δ			

	and instructional and operational needs operate in a timely, efficient and effective manner			surveys				
3	The LEA delegates operational flexibility to the school	Superintendent BRICK	Lead Turnaround partner	MOU / SLA	Δ			
4	A new school operations manager is hired with the same transformational attributes	Superintendent / BRICK	1/3 Salary	• Job description Letter of appointment	Δ			
5	The new school operations manager was selected in a fair and transparent manner	Superintendent / BRICK	1/3 Salary	• Assessment process	Δ			
6	The school governance council meets once a month to discuss school wide issues	Administration BRICK		• Meeting Minutes • Meeting dates	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
7	Instructional Cabinet meets bi-weekly to discuss teacher progress, intervention planning and resource allocation and tracking for tier two and tier three	Instructional Team	Guidance Counselor Math Coach LAL Coach Math Interventionist Reading Interventionist	• Meeting Minutes • Meeting dates	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
8	Appoint Grade Level Leaders and Department	Administration		• Appointment Letters	Δ			

	Leaders who demonstrate qualities of a transformation leader							
9	Provide professional development for Grade Level Leaders and Department Leaders on their roles and responsibilities	Administration PD Provider	Coordinator Stipend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD Evaluation • PD Agenda 	Δ			
10	The school issues RFP for outside partners	Administration		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RFP 	Δ			
11	The school follows due procurement procedures to select and appoint an external lead partner organization	Administration		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment process 	Δ			
12	The LEA, the school and the external lead partner develop an MOU for working collaboratively to substantially improve student achievement outcomes	Superintendent Administration External Lead Partner		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOU 	Δ			
13	The external lead partner organization provides high quality technical assistance and builds capacity at the school	External Lead Partner		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Partner program • Staff feedback • Program evaluation 	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
14	The school has sufficient autonomy to	Superintendent BRICK Executive	Lead Turnaround partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOU / SLA 	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ

	develop its own instructional program, provided that this meets or exceeds all mandatory State standards	Director Principal Lead Turnaround partner						
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SIG Required Activity – 9 Transformation		Establish a system to collect data for the required leading indicators for schools receiving SIG funds.						
SMART Goal:		The LEA and the school have data systems in place which allow for the collection and transfer of data and the production of report information on all nine leading indicators.						
Indicators of Success:		1. A data collection system is established which covers all nine leading indicators 2. The data can be easily transferred between the school and the LEA 3. The data collection system generate the data in a format which facilitates the production of reports						
SBR Practice to Address Goal:		<i>Exploring the pathway to rapid district improvement</i> Lane, B. (2009).. Lincoln, IL: <i>School boards: Focus on school performance, not money and patronage</i> Hill, P. T. (2003).						
Description of Action Steps		Person(s) Responsible	Resources (List all items from budget with page #)	Documentation	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1	The school identifies interim success criteria for the nine indicators	Executive Director Principal	Lead Turnaround partner	SIG KPIs	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
2	The LEA has established processes and procedures to collect and analyze data at various key points during the year.	Superintendent BRICK	Lead Turnaround partner	LEA data policy and procedures	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
3	The school and its external lead partner will be required to produce quarterly report on progress against all nine leading indicators and the respective success criteria	BRICK Principal	Lead Turnaround partner	Quarterly reports	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
4	These reports will highlight key successes and areas for development	Superintendent BRICK Principal	Lead Turnaround partner	Quarterly reports	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ

Appendix C
Chapters 8 and 9: Years 2 to 4

Document C1

BRICK Strategic Plan 2012–2017

[BRICK] AVON ACADEMY
building responsible intelligent creative kids

[@ 2017]

OUR MISSION is to Build Responsible, Intelligent and Creative Kids. Through a globally minded curriculum, extended day program, individualized professional development, and community and family partnerships, BRICK provides students with the opportunity to be college and life ready in an interconnected global society.

Five foundational bricks serve as the guiding principles for all BRICK schools.

- 1 Whole-Student Focus**
In order to close the achievement gap the whole student must be addressed: academic, physical and emotional health, and character development.
- 2 Academic Environment**
An educational environment where the joy of learning and high expectations is the norm and children are empowered daily with rigorous material to become life-long learners.
- 3 Team Value**
Stakeholders will foster an environment where staff members are committed, not compliant, to the mission of educating children. Creating an exceptionally professional, collegial, and stimulating environment where everyone has adequate support, a real voice, and the tools they need to be triumphant is essential to our school culture.
- 4 Efficiency**
Operations of the school shall be separate from academics and shall run on a business model. This will allow teachers to concentrate only on academics and will ensure all resources are funneled into the classroom.
- 5 Professional Development**
Research-based professional development will be differentiated and tailored made to address student needs. Teachers will have ongoing support to learn how best to adjust their teaching to the learning needs of their students.

[ABOUT]

In September 2009, a group comprised of Teach For America alumni, who started their careers in the Newark Public Schools, formed Building Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids (BRICK). BRICK is a non-profit education management organization devoted to building a strong public-private partnership with Newark Public Schools. The focus of the organization is to turnaround persistently failing schools in the South Ward of Newark, NJ. This partnership was initiated as part of the district's *Great Expectations 2009 -13 Strategic Plan*. BRICK's first school was Avon Avenue now known as BRICK Avon Academy.

[BRICK AVON ACADEMY]

Over the last year, BRICK Avon Academy has begun its transformation into an exemplary International School. We have done a lot of foundational work on practices – backwards planning, individualized instruction, use of data and student-teacher engagement. Now we need to strengthen these practices to ensure strong implementation in the classroom.

In addition, next year, we need to strengthen our social, emotional and physical health program here at BRICK Avon Academy. In order for us to dramatically change the academic outcomes of our students, the school must also support the social and emotional development of students. Academics and social and emotional health are linked in the environment that we serve. We firmly believe that part of our success lies in promoting social and emotional skills that underpin effective learning.

[Academics]

- 64% of students either proficient or advanced proficient on the Language Arts NJASK
- 71% of students either proficient or advanced proficient on the Math NJASK
- Be authorized as an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program

[Teacher Effectiveness]

- 100% of teachers ranked (70%) proficient or (30%) advanced proficient on teacher effectiveness rubric
- Develop a strong mentor model for new teachers (teacher induction)
- 10% of teachers are board certified

[Student Development]

- 100% of parents reached by an administrator (Home – School Linkage)
- Discipline referrals decrease by 90% as compared to the 2010 – 2011 school year

[2017 GOALS]

[How do we get there?]

First, it is important to note that in our first year (benchmark year) we made tremendous progress towards laying a good foundation to start major reforms at BRICK Avon Academy. We will continue to focus on improving and maintaining the quality of our instruction. Effective teaching will make the most difference, and we will continue to ensure that we have the most effective teachers possible. To that end, we will concentrate on three areas that will enable us to be successful.

So, for the next five years we will be operating with thrusters on full.
We are going to Build Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids!

1. Ensure that there is an effective teacher in each classroom

1. Recruit, train and retain effective teachers
2. Use a scope and sequence to measure teacher effectiveness
3. Develop an incentive program to honor teachers who do magnificent work
4. Provide quality job-embedded instructional coaching
5. Provide quality on-going professional development for all implemented programs
6. Recruit and train a pool of quality substitutes
7. Conduct a summer teacher institute to give adequate time for teachers to prepare
8. Work with Schools of Education to become a residency school
9. Work with third party teacher recruitment agencies to place teachers at BRICK Avon

2. Provide tailored individualized instruction to each student

1. Implement a school-wide Response To Intervention program
2. Provide strategic interventions to meet the student's needs
3. Implement quarterly benchmark exams in LAL, Math, Social Studies and Science
4. Provide a rigorous International minded curriculum
5. Grant additional learning time for students
6. Give students learning excursions throughout the year
7. Use differentiated online instructional tools to meet the individual needs of children

3. Student's OWN their learning

1. Implement a social skills program to develop social and emotional skills
2. Raise behavior and attendance expectations for students
3. Create a strong parent linkage between the school and home (School Contract)
4. Expand opportunities for parents and other stakeholders to volunteer

[2011 - 2012 Specific Actions]

1. Ensure that there is an effective teacher in each classroom

[Indicators of success]

- Over 80% of teachers feel supported as measured by the school climate survey
- Teachers progressively increase their rubric scores
- Over 90% of proficient and distinguished teachers return in August 2013

[BRICK/NPS]

- Provide ongoing coaching to school leadership
- Ensure school is able to have full autonomy on selection of staff
- Work with third parties to place effective teachers at BRICK Avon Academy
- Work with Schools of Education to become a residency school
- Develop a system for recruiting and training quality substitutes
- Provide effective feedback to school leadership
- Conduct a school leadership retreat

[Building Leaders]

- Follow through on a rigorous screening process and conduct rigorous performance interviews to recruit teachers
- Implement a scope and sequence to measure teacher effectiveness (rubric)
- Conduct individual conferences with staff before and after benchmark exams
- Provide individualize coaching to teachers
- Award teachers for increased student performance

[Staff]

- Participate in teacher interviews
- Participate and provide input on scope and sequence to measure teacher effectiveness
- Complete staff climate surveys to provide feedback
- Implement planned instruction
- Actively participate in the school community
- Actively participate in meetings

2. Provide tailored individualized instruction to each student

[Indicators of success]

- Classroom observations and scrutiny of student work clearly demonstrate that staff are using data to inform and differentiate instruction in order to meet the academic needs of individual students
- Increased student engagement in lessons
- Increased mastery on benchmark exams

[BRICK/NPS]

- Provide additional funding to building leaders to meet the individual needs of children
- Provide increased autonomy of the school to meet the individual needs of children
- Provide ongoing professional development in order to support purposeful instruction and alignment
- Participate in the selection of benchmark exams
- Create and monitor measures of success
- Work with third party extended learning companies to provide additional enrichment time

[Building Leaders]

- Implement a Response to Intervention System
- Select and administer benchmark exams
- Conduct book study centered around *Driven by Data: A Practical Guide to Improve Instruction* to create a common language
- Develop curriculum maps for reading, writing, math, social studies and science
- Conduct a teacher institute to train teachers on curriculum maps, use of data and school wide systems
- Provide effective professional development
- Reflect quarterly on the school-wide curriculum
- Monitor the use of curriculum maps and provide timely feedback

[Staff]

- Implement established curriculum
- Administer benchmark exams
- Use data to inform instruction
- Actively participate in grade level meetings
- Provide effective feedback through staff surveys

3. Student's OWN their learning

[Indicators of success]

- Students articulate personal goals and progress towards goals their goals
- 100% of parents sign the student-parent-school contract by September 5th, 2011
- The number of hours volunteers work increase by 20% (use 2010 – 2011 data as baseline)
- A 25% decrease in student discipline referrals (use 2010 - 2011 data as baseline)

[BRICK/NPS]

- Develop processes to link volunteers to volunteer activities and work in schools
- Give autonomy to building leaders to create and implement a student-parent-school contract
- Provide additional resources to building leadership to build a successful culture

[Building Leaders]

- Make a personal contact with each student and family
- Create a student-parent-school contract
- Implement a school-wide social skills program
- Create a safe space for volunteers
- Develop a school-wide rewards system (BRICK Bucks)
- Ensure each child has an individualize student improvement BRICK plan

[Staff]

- Implement school-wide social skills program
- Contact parents at least four times a year
- Develop creative in-class behavioral strategies to prevent discipline referrals
- Write a BRICK plan for each student

Document C2

BRICK Avon Weekly Newsletter Sample February 18, 2014



FEBRUARY 18, 2014

THIS WEEK at BRICK

VOL 4 ISSUE 23

Announcements

- Conferences:** The district has rescheduled conferences for THIS Thursday (2/20) from 1-7pm. Dinner provided. Teachers are expected to CALL ALL parents to schedule a conference time for Thursday. BRICK Plans, Promotion in Doubt letters and Attendance letters will be distributed Thursday morning.
- Black History Month:** Any teacher wanting to contribute to Black History Month PLEASE see Mrs. Doctor. If you'd like to sing in the gospel choir, see Mrs. Haygood!
- Hall Passes, etc.:** Please ensure ANY student leaving your classroom has a hall pass. Only ONE student should leave the room at any time.
- Nominate a Colleague!** | email Mr. Perpich your nomination for "BRICK Builder" or "Thumbs Up" or "Great Work Award" for March's staff meeting. Peer nominations mean a great deal!

Important Events

- Monday 2/17** | No School
- Thursday 2/20** | Conferences 1-7pm
- Monday 3/3** | My Very Own Library
- Tuesday 3/4** | MVOL Family Literacy Night
- Friday 3/7** | Cycle 3 comments **DUE** by 11:59pm
- Wednesday 3/12** | Progress Reports Sent
- Friday 3/14** | Tier II Science Kits **DUE**
- Wednesday 3/19** | ANET #3 ELA
- Thursday 3/20** | ANET #3 Math

This Week...

Monday 2/17	Tuesday 2/18	Wednesday 2/19	Thursday 2/20	Friday 2/21
<p style="text-align: center;">No School President's Day</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> S. Benz's Announcements Kindergarten Open Houses at 9am, 2pm & 5pm 6-8 Grade Open House 5-6pm 6-8 MAB Workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6-8 Humanities Mid-Term Exam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6-8 Science Trimester Exam 1pm Dismissal for Conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> K-2 BRICK Bucks Store



Staff Birthdays!

- 3 | G. Rothschild
- 7 | W. Williams
- 10 | T. Carr
- 13 | L. Watts
- 13 | S. Benz
- 22 | N. Freeman

Next Week

Monday 2/24	Tuesday 2/25	Wednesday 2/26	Thursday 2/27	Friday 2/28
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> S. Benz's Announcements 6-8 BRICK Bucks Store 8:30-10:30am 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kindergarten Open Houses at 9am & 2pm K-2 Incentive Event @ 3pm (craft!) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PowerSchool not available ALL day 3-5 Incentive Event @ 3pm (craft!) SST meeting @ 9am 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6th Grade Field Trip to Newark Museum (S. Benz) 3rd Grade Town Hall @ 1pm 4th Grade Town Hall @ 3pm



A Positive School Community

This new section of *This Week* will provide reminders, highlights and new, fresh ideas to try in your classroom from Responsive Classroom and Developmental Designs. Teacher submissions are always welcome! -Mrs. Capers

The next 3 issues will discuss goals and strategies for responding to misbehavior according to Responsive Classroom. It will also include information on how to introduce the approach and identify which strategy to use. Stay tuned!

Ways Teachers Can Use Language More Effectively, part 2 of 3

Last week's edition discussed Reinforcing language and noted that effective teachers notice and strategically highlight students' accomplishments, effort, and attitudes.


Reminding Language | “By using reminding language before students start a possibly challenging task, or right when they start to make a mistake, teachers help them stay on task, organized, responsible, and safe,” says Denton. “Also, keep in mind that reminders are most effective when both the student and teacher feel calm.”

- Prompt children to remember for themselves, showing your belief in their competence and helping build autonomy. Instead of saying, “Sit alone or next to someone you won’t be tempted to talk to,” say, “Think about what you can do to help yourself concentrate.”
- Use matter-of-fact tone and body language, helping students focus on what needs to be done rather than what the teacher thinks of them. Instead of saying, “What did we say is the next step in making these kinds of graphs?” in a singsong voice, arms crossed, eyes rolling, say, “What did we say is the next step in making these kinds of graphs?” with neutral body language.
- Be brief; students tune out long directives. Instead of saying, “I’m hearing people starting to sound disrespectful when they disagree. Everyone, remember to say ‘I hear your point, but I have a different idea’ or ask a clarifying question the way we learned. If we interrupt and say things like ‘No, that’s not true,’ or ‘You’re wrong,’ we’ll shut down discussion,” say “What did we learn about disagreeing honestly and respectfully?”
- Watch for follow-through, because if we don’t, children may learn that the teacher’s words can be ignored. Instead of giving a reminder and immediately turning to something else, watch and acknowledge the child’s action with a nod or a smile.

***Try these simple language strategies this week!
Discuss the outcomes with your colleagues.***

Document C3

BRICK Avon Weekly Newsletter Sample February 10, 2014



FEBRUARY 10, 2014

THIS WEEK at BRICK

VOL 4 ISSUE 22


Announcements

- **Conferences:** Ensure conferences are scheduled with ALL parents/families for Thursday. Calls MUST be made to ensure all students receive an update on progress. Report cards, BRICK Plans, Promotion in Doubt letters and Attendance letters will be distributed Thursday morning.
- **Newark Mayoral Education Debate:** Teach for America is co-sponsoring the debate at the Paul Robeson Center on Wednesday 2/12. If you'd like to attend, please RSVP by Tuesday at noon via this [google doc](#) (click on the link holding CTRL)
- **Open Houses:** There will be a kindergarten and middle school Open House for parents/families interested in attending next year. **Bulletin boards in the hallway and in the classroom need to be updated by end of the day Friday February 14th.** These items will be checked Friday and will be used as documentation for teacher's annuals.


Important Events

- **Monday 2/10** | Staff Meeting
- **Tuesday 2/11** | Wellness Day
- **Wednesday 2/12** | No School
- **Thursday 2/13** | Conferences 1-7pm
- **Friday 2/14** | Cycle 2 Awards Assembly
- **Monday 2/17** | No School

This Week...


Monday 2/10	Tuesday 2/11	Wednesday 2/12	Thursday 2/13	Friday 2/14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M. Oppong's Announcements • 3-8 ELA Workshop with Dr. Riley • Staff Meeting @ 4pm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-8 Humanities Workshop with Dr. Riley • 6-8 Comedy Show @ 3pm (invited only) • SEND HOME CONFERENCE REMINDERS! 	<p>No School Lincoln's Birthday</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1pm Dismissal • Conferences 1-7pm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycle 2 Awards Ceremony (tentatively)

Staff Birthdays!



- 3 | G. Rothschild
- 7 | W. Williams
- 10 | T. Carr
- 13 | L. Watts
- 13 | S. Benz
- 22 | N. Freeman

Next Week

Monday 2/17	Tuesday 2/18	Wednesday 2/19	Thursday 2/20	Friday 2/21
<p>No School President's Day</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M. Oppong's Announcements • Kindergarten Open Houses at 9am, 2pm & 5pm • 6-8 Grade Open House 5-6pm • 6-8 MAB Workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6-8 Humanities Mid-Term Exam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6-8 Science Trimester Exam • 3-5 BRICK Bucks Store 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-2 BRICK Bucks Store



A Positive School

This new section of *This Week* will provide reminders, highlights and new, fresh ideas to try in your classroom from *Responsive Classroom* and *Developmental Designs*. Teacher submissions are

The next 3 issues will discuss goals and strategies for responding to misbehavior according to Responsive Classroom. It will also include information on how to introduce the approach and identify which strategy to use. Stay tuned!

Ways Teachers Can Use Language More Effectively, part 1 of 3

In this thoughtful article in *Responsive Classroom*, author Paula Denton says that teachers' choice of words, tone of voice, and pacing have a big influence on how students think, act, and learn. She identifies '3 Rs' and describes ineffective and effective strategies in each area:


Reinforcing language | Effective teachers notice and strategically highlight students' accomplishments, effort, and attitudes:

- They name concrete, specific behaviors so students will know what to keep doing. Instead of saying, "Good job" or "Your spelling shows progress" say "You remembered to change the 'y' to 'i' when adding 'ed.'"
- They de-emphasize personal approval so the focus is on improving skills, not pleasing the teacher. Instead of saying "I'm so pleased with the way you added key details to your main point" say "You added key details to your main point. That helps your audience understand and be persuaded."
- They avoid holding up one student as an example to others. "The student held up may feel triumphant, but others are likely to feel devalued or criticized," says Denton. "And the student held up may even feel embarrassed. Instead of saying, "Notice how Glenda used four sources for her research project. Let's see all of you do that," say privately to Glenda, "You used at least three sources as we learned to do. That makes your research credible."
- Find positives to reinforce in all students so that, over time, every child has his or her strengths appreciated.

***Try these simple language strategies this week!
Discuss the outcomes with your colleagues.***

Document C4

BRICK Avon Weekly Newsletter Sample March 3, 2014



MARCH 3, 2014

VOL 4 ISSUE 25


THIS WEEK at BRICK

Announcements

- **Read Across America:** On Monday 3/3, all K-8 ELA classes are to engage in reading celebrations from 9-10:30am! Be creative!
- **Rec Room Usage:** Mrs. Ali and Mrs. Reggio are working with groups of students in the Rec. This should be a QUIET space – including at the copiers, etc. Thanks!
- **Snack Reminder:** Ensure you pick up your snack by 1:30pm and drop off the container by 2:30pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.
- **Teacher Walks:** Email Ms. Weidman if you want to joining a walk! Thanks to several 6-8 teachers who expressed interest!
- **Hall Passes, etc.:** ANYONE out of a classroom needs a pass. Ensure you give passes!
- **Nominate a Colleague!** : email Mr. Perpich your nomination for "BRICK Builder" or "Thumbs Up" or "Great Work Award" for March's staff meeting. Peer nominations mean a great deal!

Important Events


- **Tuesday 3/4** | My Very Own Library
- **Tuesday 3/4** | MVOL Family Literacy Night
- **Friday 3/7** | Cycle 3 comments **DUE** by 11:59pm
- **Wednesday 3/12** | Progress Reports Sent
- **Friday 3/14** | Tier II Science Kits **DUE**
- **Monday 3/17** | Staff Meeting @ 4pm
- **Wednesday 3/26** | ANET #3 ELA
- **Thursday 3/27** | ANET #3 Math



Staff Birthdays!

- 1 | A. Smith
- 11 | V. Williams
- 18 | S. Days
- 20 | E. Harris
- 22 | U. Johnson
- 26 | B. Doctor

This Week...

Monday	3/3	Tuesday	3/4	Wednesday	3/5	Thursday	3/6	Friday	3/7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Jones' Announcements • Paper Distribution • "Read Across America" celebrations 9-10:30 (in classrooms) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Literacy Night 4:30-6pm • 6th Grade Town Hall @ 3pm • 6-8 Grade Level Leader mtg @ 4pm 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MVOL #2 – all day! See schedule! • SIP Meeting @ 9am • ELA seminar with Dr. Diley 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6-8 Humanities Seminar with Dr. Riley • K-5 I&RS Meetings • 3-5 BRICK Bucks Store 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments DUE into PowerSchool • K-2 BRICK Bucks Store • 7th Grade Town Hall @ 3pm • 5th Grade Town Hall @ 3pm 	

Next Week

Monday	3/10	Tuesday	3/11	Wednesday	3/12	Thursday	3/13	Friday	3/14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Jones' Announcements 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress reports distributed (3-8 MUST sign for them) • 6-8 Liberty Science Center Trip • K-5 Vertical Team Meeting at 4pm 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-5 I&RS Meetings 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tier II Science Kits DUE (outside doors by 4:15pm) 	



A Positive School Community

This new section of *This Week* will provide reminders, highlights and new, fresh ideas to try in your classroom from *Responsive Classroom* and *Developmental Designs*. Teacher submissions are always welcome! —Mrs. Capers

The following outline is a preview of 7 sample days of advisory. It is an excerpt from a Best-Seller, *The Advisory Book, REVISED EDITION, Building a Community of Learners Grades 5-9*. This book has helped thousands of teachers to lead successful advisories. It's filled with a year of advisory meetings, planned and ready to go. Check it out!

THEME: SOCIAL SKILLS

Need Addressed—Competence

Social and academic skills are interdependent. You can't have success in learning or in life without social skills. You can't concentrate, exchange ideas, listen, or collaborate unless you have some basic social competencies. We use the list created by Elliott and Gresham (2008) to determine how social skills affect students' social and academic capacities: cooperation, communication, assertion, responsibility, engagement, empathy, and self-control. We have devised advisories that help students explore each skill.

1 CPR: Cooperation

Greeting: Snake Greeting

Sharing: Partner Share: Tell about a time in your life when teamwork was important, in or out of school. A couple of volunteers share with whole group.

Activity: Helium Hoop OR Shrinking World

Ohayo, Student!

Today we'll start talking about, practicing, and **implementing** social skills. Initial below to indicate how important you think social skills are to success in life.

Not	Sometimes	Very
-----	-----------	------

2 CPR: Assertion

Greeting: Choice of Voice Greeting (page 217, All Group Greeting variation)

Sharing: Individual Share: Tell about a time when you stood up for yourself or for someone else.

Activity: Honey, Do You Love Me? OR What Are You Doing?

Salutations, Strong Ones!

Here's the scene: you walk into a room with about forty people, all socializing in pairs and small groups. What do you do first? Answer on your number line.

3 CPR: Responsibility

Greeting: Partner Greeting

Sharing: Whip Share: What was a time when you had to handle a lot of responsibility? For example, what games did you play with the little kids at your sibling's birthday party?

Activity: Obstacle Course

Good Morning, Student!

Today we're going to work with the "r" word, responsibility. How often do you act responsibly? Initial your answer.

Never	Sometimes
Usually	Always

4 CPR: Empathy

Greeting: Silent Greeting

Share: Individual Share: Tell about an embarrassing moment you experienced.

Activity: Talk Show OR One-Minute Talk

Hello, Friend!

Today's meeting gives us a chance to show support for one another. When is it hard for you to feel **empathy** for someone? Answer on your number line.

5 A+: Self-control

Greeting: Snake Greeting

Activity: Radio OR Tag Games OR Team Red Light OR Where Are You From?

Reflection: Whole group:

With fingers, show from one to five how well you think we did in self-control during the game.

Now show how hard it was for you to use self-control.

Any ideas for how we could make the game more fun without losing our controls?

Salutational

Today's social skill topic is the one John Dewey (an important American educator) said was key to success. Without self-control, not only do you get in trouble, but you can't succeed in school or in life. We have to teach ourselves to hold back on **impulses** to break rules, and have fun anyway. Let's practice with a game!

6 CPR: Engagement

Greeting: Ball Toss

Share: Whip Share: *On a scale of one to ten, how good are you at getting and staying focused and interested when doing school work?*

Activity: One

What's up? Think about what interests you in life. Name one thing that you get into and do with a lot of zest. Write on your number line your "in the zone" activity.

7 A+: Social Skills Group Work

Greeting: Reach Out Greeting (page 219, Choice Greeting variation)

Activity: Divide students into seven groups (one each of the social skills, see page 96). Give each group a list of familiar games. The group decides which one is best to practice their assigned skill and prepares to lead the group in that activity.

Reflection: Groups explain how their chosen activity teaches their assigned skill, and lead the whole advisory in playing it. After playing, whole group indicates with thumbs whether they agree that they practiced the designated skill while playing the game. You will need two or three advisory periods for all seven groups to lead a game. Limit time for each game.

Greetings, Everyone!

We practiced self-control by playing a game. Other games can teach us other social skills, so today we'll divide into small groups, and each group will teach us a social skill with a game. Get ready to think and play at the same time!

8 A+: Social Skills in CPR

Greeting: Introductory Greeting

Activity: Small groups meet to rate the social skills of their advisory group using the Social Skills in CPR Assessment Tool, page 268.

Reflection: Small groups report ratings; whole group discusses reports and possible improvements.

Good Morning, **Socialites**.

Today we'll use the Social Skills in CPR Assessment Tool to decide how well we're using our social skills during our Circle of Power and Respect.

Document C5*BRICK Strategic Plan 2013–2018*

[BRICK] ACADEMY
building responsible intelligent creative kids

[@ 2018]

OUR MISSION is to Build Responsible, Intelligent and Creative Kids.

Six foundational bricks serve as the guiding principles for the BRICK organization.

- 1 Whole-Student Focus**
In order to close the achievement gap the whole student must be addressed: academic, physical and emotional health, and character development.
- 2 Academic Environment**
An educational environment where the joy of learning and high expectations is the norm and children are empowered daily with rigorous material to become life-long learners.
- 3 Team Value**
Stakeholders will foster an environment where staff members are committed, not compliant, to the mission of educating children. Creating an exceptionally professional, collegial, and stimulating environment where everyone has adequate support, a real voice, and the tools they need to be triumphant is essential to our school culture.
- 4 Efficiency**
Operations of the school shall be separate from academics and shall run on a business model. This will allow teachers to concentrate only on academics and will ensure all resources are funneled into the classroom.
- 5 Professional Development**
Research-based professional development will be differentiated and tailored made to address student needs. Staff will have ongoing support to learn how best to adjust their practices to the learning needs of students.
- 6 Communication**
All stakeholders will actively participate in a safe environment where consistent dialogue is transparent and motivational. Negative emotions are diffused efficiently through active listening and open body language.

[Introduction]

The staff of BRICK Academy developed this strategic plan to provide a five-year roadmap for organizational development and to expand BRICK Academy's impact in the Clinton Hill area of Newark's, South Ward. The Board of Directors and staff will review progress quarterly and will review and update the plan annually, as needed.

[ABOUT]

BRICK is a non-profit education management organization devoted to providing quality educational options for our nations neediest children. BRICK was created organically from the community to help uplift the Clinton Hill area of Newark's South Ward by concentrating on turning around chronically failing schools; and, elevating the conversation around what it takes to truly transform the educational outcomes of our nation's neediest children. At this time BRICK currently operates two schools in the Clinton Hill Area.

[The Future of BRICK Academy]

Based upon current data, BRICK Academy has proven it can transform chronically failing schools, resulting in quality neighborhood options for parents. However, BRICK recognizes that these transformations cannot happen in isolation. Despite recent gains and accomplishments achieved at both schools, BRICK in its current form cannot fully meet the demands of the city's neediest students, as the ills of systemic poverty seep through our classroom walls each and everyday. BRICK understands that when the social fabric of a community is destroyed-things middle class families take for granted like quality schooling, usable playgrounds, decent housing and safe streets, the pull of systemic poverty becomes so strong that many families cannot break the cycle.

While the cycle of poverty cannot and will not be used as an excuse for mediocrity, BRICK still wrestles with our social conscience and our role in addressing the elephant in the room disguised as poverty. Thus, BRICK must continue to innovate and develop various approaches to reach deeper into a child's life.

BRICK proposes to develop a national innovative model to address the needs of an entire community. "Name TBD", BRICK's framework, is built on using schools as change agents for community development. This model is distinct in that schools are usually add-on parts of community development initiatives BRICK is proposing that the school becomes the core and all services are pushed out from the school. BRICK developed the concept by studying many exemplar projects across the country: Harlem Children's Zone, St. Benedict's Preparatory School, Teacher Plus, The Hershey School, Grove School, Idea Public Schools and Rocketship Schools. BRICK recognizes three important components to these approaches - Strong, Healthy and Safe Community, Quality PreK-8 Schools (including a quality half-time nurturing boarding school) and Community Revitalization.

South Ward Clinton Hill Area Map

Newark's South Ward Clinton Hill Data

- 7,590 Children (<18)
- 67% Single Female Households
- 61% of renters are cost-burdened
- 22% Unemployment
- 46% Children live in poverty
- 4/5 Elementary schools are chronically failing

[2018 GOALS]

The strategic direction and goals included in this plan are BRICK Academy's response to its understanding, environmental scan, academic data and research findings of what it will take to truly transform the life trajectory of the South Ward's most vulnerable children. These goals provide a roadmap for fulfilling the strategic direction.

Increasing quality neighborhood options in the South Ward (Clinton Hill Area)

1. Add 2-3 schools to BRICK's portfolio
2. Increasing interventions to ensure that all children can succeed (i.e. therapeutic board school)

Create a sustainable organization: fiscal, human capital and community capital

1. BRICK funding model is fully diverse: 33% Foundations, 33% Individual and 33% Public Funds
2. BRICK has a board that is the same caliber of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund

Build a model that supports Strong Families and Strong Communities

1. Opening and running a Family Success Center (Expected 2015)
2. Transient population in the Clinton Hill area of the South Ward is decreased by 50%

Strengthen the partnership between Newark Public Schools and BRICK

1. BRICK Academy becomes a national model that uses schools as change agents for community development

[How do we get there in the next five years?]

The five-year period of the this strategic plan will be a time of assessing, increasing quality and deepening BRICK Academy's commitment to its work. Concurrently, BRICK Academy will take more of a leadership role in the Clinton Hill area of the South Ward by working with a broader array of community resources and building upon current success.

So, for the next five years we will be operating with thrusters on full!
We are going to Build Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids!

1. Increasing quality neighborhood options in the South Ward (Clinton Hill Area)

The core of the BRICK Academy model is to provide quality educational options for the neediest children in the South Ward - thus, BRICK has to provide a quality educational platform that enables all students to master their individual goals. The Strategic Goal 1 encompasses six supporting outcome goals:

- 1.1 An effective common core curriculum framework for PreK-8
- 1.2 A professional development model that is individualized for each teacher
- 1.3 Transform early education by aligning PreK-3 English Language Arts
- 1.4 Master BRICK's blending learning model to individualize instruction for students
- 1.5 Provide quality options to parents in the Clinton Hill area of the South Ward
- 1.6 Be innovative to meet the individual needs of each student

2. Create a sustainable organization: fiscal, human capital and community capital

BRICK Academy must become a sustainable organization- in order to meet the individual needs of the students and serve the community. BRICK Academy is focused on creating a stable financial plan, training/recruiting effective staff members and building community capital. Goal 2 encompasses four supporting goals:

- 2.1 Create a diversified sustainable financial model
- 2.2 Build a pipeline to recruit and train effective staff members
- 2.3 Foster sustained community relationships for organizational support
- 2.4 Build an executive board with education expertise and fundraising capacity
- 2.5 Build internal accountability metrics for staff

3. Build a model that supports Strong Families and Strong Communities

Central to BRICK Academy's vision to Build Responsible Intelligent Creative Kids is to build and enhance the positive community elements that positively effect the outcomes of children; and not ignore the surrounding community elements that negatively effect the outcomes of students. BRICK Academy has to take a holistic approach to uplifting the South Ward community so that the children we serve can reach their full potential. Goal 3 encompasses three elements:

- 3.1 Provide support to parents to meet the needs of their children
- 3.2 Empower parents about their educational options to hold schools accountable
- 3.3 Create healthy community physical environments for students through community revitalization

4. Strengthen the partnership between Newark Public Schools and BRICK

The partnership between BRICK Academy and the Newark Public School started in 2009 when the two organizations partnered to transform chronically failing schools. In order for BRICK to continue to operate and transform the lives of children - the partnership has be strong at all times. Goal 4 encompasses three elements:

- 4.1 Meet with senior level Newark Public School executives on a monthly basis
- 4.2 Meet with Newark Public school's superintendent on a quarterly bases
- 4.3 BRICK becomes the go-to framework to service the needs of the South Ward community