

Section III – School Programs and Processes

Theme 1 – Standards, Assessment, and Accountability: Vision, Leadership, and School Planning

How does your school focus on meeting the needs of all students, including those not yet proficient, and carefully monitor the effectiveness of all school programs?

- 1.1 How does your school's vision frame the decisions that are made at your site?
- 1.2 How does school leadership facilitate and coordinate the implementation of school programs?
- 1.3 How does the school plan address the needs of all students?
- 1.4 How is assessment information used to monitor the effectiveness of all school programs?
- 1.5 How does the school prepare students for middle school and beyond?
- 1.6 How are parents/guardians and community members meaningfully informed about the effectiveness of the school?

The Monte Gardens Elementary School (MGE) community is deeply committed to the exemplary academic, social, emotional and physical development of all students. Our school community unites in purpose through our articulated vision: *To develop responsible and well-prepared students by maintaining high academic and behavioral standards in an environment where parents and teachers work together and instill a love of learning.* This vision ensures all students access to a rigorous core curriculum, state-adopted textbooks and supplementary materials, research-based teaching practices, and individualized intervention and enrichment programs. The tenets of our program reflect the philosophies of First Class, Elementary Makes the Grade!, and No Child Left Behind and define our commitment to a developmentally appropriate core curriculum in English Language Arts (ELA), math, history-social science (HSS), PE, health, and visual and performing arts (VPA). The tenets align with our vision and support the success of our increasingly diverse student population:

- Maintain an orderly learning environment supporting the rights and safety of all students and adults.
- Provide consistent curriculum, within and between grade levels, based on state and district standards and benchmarks.
- Provide nightly homework to extend students' learning beyond the classroom.
- Provide ongoing communication between school and home to enhance cooperation.
- Assist students in developing study habits for working independently and completing assigned work.

Our staff, School Site Council (SSC), parents/guardians and community members re-examine our vision statement and tenets annually in public meetings to confirm that they remain relevant to our goals for student achievement. We are committed to working together to hold constant the belief that MGE is a school where *all students are expected to do well, parents are to be involved in their child's education, and students are taught to be organized in the management and preparation of their school work.* Parents confirm their commitment to support our tenets by signing a Parent Support Agreement, and students sign a Student Responsibility Pledge yearly. Teachers and the principal exchange lists of professional responsibilities and commitments that support teaching and learning. This elevated level of commitment and expectation for excellence is our lens for making decisions at MGE.

Our Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) is written with input from parents, teachers, support staff, and community members, approved by the SSC, and presented to the school board for final approval. District-trained SSC members oversee the development and evaluation of the SPSA, ensuring alignment to the district's Local Education Agency Plan. We

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determine math and ELA performance goals after examining State Testing and Assessment Results (STAR) data disaggregated by grade, language, socioeconomics, program, gender, and ethnicity. Specific performance goals for students at-risk of not meeting the standards are established, intervention programs and instructional strategies supporting those goals are delineated, and staff development relating to the implementation of intervention programs and funding sources to support training are identified in the SPSA.

Of 574 students, 10% receive free or reduced meals and 5% are designated English Language Learners (ELL). All 60 GATE students and 60.5% of students in our Hispanic subgroup work at proficient or advanced levels in math and ELA. IEP goals aligned to the standards are in place for 16 Special Day Class, 42 speech and six resource students. The academic improvement goals in our SPSA are to improve the proficiency levels for *all* students by increasing the percentage of students scoring proficient and advanced in math (from 74% to 77%) and ELA (from 71% to 74%). To do this, each grade level sets a goal to increase the percentage of students at proficient and advanced. Math grade-level goals are: 2nd 76% to 79%; 3rd 66% to 70%; 4th 84% to 86%; and 5th 74% to 77%. ELA grade-level goals are: 2nd 60% to 64%, 3rd 66% to 70%, 4th 84% to 86%; and 5th 74% to 77%. After analyzing assessment data, teachers design grade-level action plans for meeting these goals. Specific students not proficient are identified and intervention is employed. For example, 1st graders needing extra practice to acquire sight vocabulary work with volunteers and peer tutors, and are assigned differentiated homework to accelerate their learning. Weekly assessment data guides next steps for interventions. Students not making progress toward proficiency are targeted for our intervention protocols (p22; par1).

MGE families participate in school decisions, governance and advocacy through our Parents' Club (PC), SSC, committees, and as representatives to district panels and focus groups. The Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) was organized by the principal in 2004-2005 to oversee the alignment of site resources in support of our school's goals. Comprised of parents, teachers and the principal, the committee appraises the PC, SPSA and MGE's general fund budgets to make tactical recommendations for long-term spending in support of our SPSA and vision. Technology, landscaping, and library plans are funded through the SPC. This committee monitors fund raising goals, school attendance goals, and parent involvement goals, all of which are tied to our SPSA program improvement goals. In support of ELA improvement goals, the SSC requested the PC to review the cost of extending our librarian, a certificated reading teacher, by one day a week in order to provide reading intervention to an additional 12 students. Fund raising goals will be monitored by the SPC to support the cost of reading intervention. To determine the effectiveness of the intervention, the staff, PC and SSC will review student achievement data from the intervention annually. The SPC publishes a monthly accountability report, which informs the community as to whether or not we are on track to meet our academic, attendance, parent involvement, and fund raising goals. As a result, the school's improvement goals stay in the forefront throughout the year and parents have an opportunity to be involved in our improvement process.

Career awareness activities are integrated into the K-5 curriculum. Business leaders teach the Jr. Achievement program in K-5. We instill good work habits, organization and study skills, and a sense of responsibility in *all* our students to prepare them for secondary school and future career opportunities. Like their middle school counterparts, our 5th graders use a date book to record and organize school and homework. Administrators from Sequoia Middle School (SMS) visit MGE in the spring to discuss the 6th grade program with students. 5th and 6th grade teachers meet in the spring to discuss program continuity in relationship to the CSHSEE, and to facilitate the smooth transition of all students. The resource specialists and

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SDC teachers conduct transition meetings to ensure appropriate placement for students with disabilities (SWD). Our teachers prepare student articulation cards for the 6th grade teachers. Beginning in the spring of the year, our newsletters post invitations for 5th grade parents to attend parent club meetings at SMS. We transition parents, too!

To keep our community meaningfully informed about the effectiveness of our improvement process, grade-level standards, data analysis results, and STAR and API results are reviewed with parents during Back-to-School Night (Sept), monthly SSC and PC meetings, the State-of-the-School meeting (Oct), in monthly school and weekly teacher newsletters, and during conferences. Each student takes home a weekly Monday envelope containing samples of student work, a teacher newsletter and notices about school or PC business. Parents of GATE students meet with us in January to review program goals. We conduct parent education nights twice a year for the parents of three and four year olds on our waiting list. Parents of four year olds on the list receive an invitation to attend Parents' Club meetings, school events and Open House. Our vision statement, school goals, and program information are in our School Accountability Report Card and school handbook, which is distributed to each family in September, and on the school website. Information for ELL families and the standards-based report cards are available in Spanish. Interpreters are available for ELL families.

Theme 2 – Standards, Assessment, and Accountability: Standards and Assessment

How is student assessment organized as a system and how does student assessment frame instruction for all students, including those not yet proficient?

- 2.1 How does the assessment system serve to effectively monitor and evaluate student achievement?
- 2.2 How are students in need of additional academic support assessed appropriately and regularly?
- 2.3 How is student progress toward the achievement of state standards used as the basis for instructional decisions?
- 2.4 How do students know what is expected to meet grade-level standards and to achieve at the proficient level?
- 2.5 How do parents/guardians receive information about their children's progress?

Consistent student assessment using reliable and verifiable data from multiple sources is a key component of Monte Gardens' academic program. All students receive a standards-based education in math, English Language Arts (ELA), science, history-social science (HSS), PE, and visual and performing arts (VPA), which is assessed using standards-aligned tools. Our staff, parents and School Site Council (SSC) use assessment results to identify patterns of underachievement and to identify specific students who are not meeting key grade-level standards. Standardized test results, district and curriculum-imbedded assessments, performance tasks, analysis of student work, and teachers' daily observations combine for the effective, systematic monitoring and evaluation of student achievement.

We use *baseline* assessments to determine what students already know and whether or not they have basic prerequisite skills; *benchmark* assessments to determine the attainment of particular standards; and *summative* assessments to determine the mastery of skills that define a group of standards, such as end-of-the year grade-level standards. The combined results of baseline and benchmark assessments determine the rate at which students are making progress towards end-of-the-year standards in each subject area. At the beginning of the year, K teachers assess students to gather reading readiness baseline data. Students are assigned to skill-based groups, providing three to five students with direct instruction, ranging

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from intense remediation to extension/enrichment. Benchmark goals are assessed weekly to determine progress toward end-of-the year K reading standards. As a result of early identification and intervention, only one K student was retained last year.

Our district's Curriculum and Instruction department works closely with schools to develop a comprehensive standards-based assessment system linked to state-adopted instructional materials. Teachers have a binder of district assessment tools for evaluating and reporting progress towards grade-level standards. All teachers are trained at the district and site level to administer these assessments and interpret the results. For example, K-5 teachers administer the district's Reading Assessment Program (RAP) and the Writing Prompt (WP) in the fall, winter and spring. The *cut-score* RAP results and the *narrative descriptions* score of the WP rubric, plus Houghton-Mifflin (HM) ELA theme tests and work samples determine a student's overall performance level in reading and writing during each of these trimesters. Teachers analyze results of HM end-of-theme tests to gather information for developing flexible skills-based groups for reinforcing specific skills, or to further develop the breadth and depth of skills for students who meet or exceed the benchmarks.

Each grade level schedules a planning day per trimester to analyze results from multiple measures, such as RAP, WP, HM theme tests, and report card grades. This examination of data provides an in-depth understanding of student performance and identifies students at-risk for not meeting grade-level standards. It also provides opportunity to make changes to the yearlong curriculum matrix (p16;par4). During planning days in 2004-2005, 4th grade teachers wrote lesson plans focusing on integrating *Six-Traits Writing* into the ELA, science and HSS curriculum as a way of increasing students' writing skills. Teachers determined performance standards, selected assessments for each standard, and developed student binders containing scoring rubrics, articles for reading, skills practice, and student work samples. Instructional strategies selected in support of ELL, SWD and at-risk students included total student engagement (TSE: p19;par1), whole and small group work, graphic organizers, and self-assessment with a four-point rubric. Teachers examined student work monthly and made changes to instructional strategies to assist all children in making progress toward meeting the standards. Collaboration with the RS facilitated accommodations for at-risk students in the Response to Intervention (RTI) clinic (pg14; par1) with additional time to complete writing assignments. The percentage of 4th grade students scoring a 4 on the WP rubric increased from 12% in winter 2004 to 51% in spring 2005. STAR scores for 4th grade ELA increased from 66% in 03-04 to 72% in 04-05.

In the spring of 2005, 5th grade teachers met to examine scores for the HM math unit test on fractions and decimals. Mastery of these concepts and related skills is crucial for success in middle school Algebra. The teachers developed a three-week after-school math clinic for intense remediation of the skills. Every student not scoring 80% or higher on the unit test was targeted to attend. The Parents' Club provided money to reduce the student-to-teacher ratio in the intervention class. All but one student successfully passed the retest at the end of the three-week period! Immediate and focused intervention proved successful.

Success in high school begins with mastering basic skills in elementary school. Analyzing student data assists us in developing school and grade-level intervention strategies to remediate instruction for students scoring far below basic, below basic, and basic. At our August 2004 in-service, the staff examined disaggregated 03-04 STAR data and identified a need to increase ELA scores for *all* students. Teachers 1st-5th developed flexible ELA skill-based rotation groups, where students received support through a curriculum with specific focuses. For example, 2nd grade taught phonics each Monday, reading comprehension strategies each Tuesday, grammar each Thursday, and vocabulary development and research

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skills each Friday during rotations. Enrichment and extension of skills were provided for high achieving students, while reteaching and reinforcement were provided for ELL, SWD, and at-risk students. Our ELL students were assigned across grade levels into ELD groups according to CELDT scores. The RS developed a pullout schedule for all at-risk students to provide extra ELA support in small groups. Parent volunteers were recruited to assist students with memorization of sounds and sight words and with reading fluency. Teachers observed students daily, assessed weekly and met after each HM theme skills test to analyze student scores and reassigned students to rotation groups. We targeted at-risk 1st–5th graders to attend before-school ELA intervention classes with a student to teacher ratio of 10:1. As a result of our concentrated interventions, our 2004-2005 API increased by 25 points, from 850 to 875. According to the 2004-2005 STAR data, the percentage of students proficient or advanced in ELA increased from 62% in 03-04 to 71% in 04-05. The percentage of ELL students scoring proficient or advanced on STAR increased from 52% to 60%. Additionally, we reclassified 25% of ELL in 2005, compared to 5% in 2004.

We are continuing the ELA and ELD rotations this year, as our data has proven them effective. Additionally, the lowest performing students receive intervention support from the RS, RS assistant, and speech and language pathologist (SLP) via the RTI model. Our district-supported RTI model complements the discrepancy model by providing three tiers of early intervention prior to referral for special education assessment. The classroom teacher and grade-level colleagues identify at-risk students and provide first tier intervention through skills-based rotation groups and focused instructional strategies. Teachers reference strategies in the *Pre Referral Intervention Manual*, which provides topic-related lists of home and school interventions for implementation. The second tier includes consultation with the Care Team (p19;par3) or a Student Success Team (SST) meeting (p19;par3), as well as push-in services from the RS, RS assistant, and the SLP. In the third tier, pullout clinics are individualized for at-risk students based on cut score performance data, prior to fourth tier referral for special education assessment. The use of RTI provides a protocol for appropriately assessing and placing students in special education. Of the 7% enrolled in special education at MGE, our data indicates that no segment of our population is over identified.

In each classroom there is evidence that students know what is expected of them to achieve the standards. Teachers post math and ELA standards and refer to them when introducing lessons. Daily agendas include learning goals and related standards. Teachers provide models of HSS and science projects showing what exemplary work looks like. Student work that “hits the mark” is posted. Students set learning goals based on their abilities for meeting the standards and they self-assess using rubrics, journals, and portfolios. 1st graders assess their cooperation skills during group work by marking icons. 2nd graders reflect in journals. 3rd-5th graders score final copies of writing assignments with a rubric.

In addition to the informal meetings that take place daily in the classrooms and hallways, lunch room, copy room, and even while waiting to use the rest room, our teachers meet monthly as grade-level teams and twice a year in cross-grade teams to ensure the consistency of expectations and continuity of standards-based skills K-5. The frequent analysis of student work at faculty and grade-level roundtables and during scheduled release days drives our instructional decisions. Differentiated curriculum, such as literature circles in 5th grade, is available for high achievers and GATE students. Teachers collaborate to identify *primary* and *complementary* standards in lessons and projects. The 4th grade social studies project to compare lifestyles of Native American tribes in Gold-Rush-Era California provides a rubric assessment of the lesson’s *primary* HSS standards, as well as *complementary* ELA reading, writing, listening, and speaking standards. The students conduct research using textbooks,

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library reference materials and the Internet. Final copies are bound into books then presented orally to all fourth grade students, who score their peer's oral presentation using a rubric.

Review of disaggregated state, district and site data provides us with useful information about our subgroups. Articulation cards, prepared for next year's teacher, provide summary information about a student's position on the academic, social and behavioral continuums. All teachers are responsible for understanding and knowing the content of their students' CUM files. State and district standards are reflected in the district-adopted standards-based report card. All teachers are trained to assess students using a four-point rubric for completion of the report cards. Teachers use CELDT results to determine ELL students' achievement of ELD benchmarks and grade-level standards. The SSC examines CELDT and STAR data to ensure that ELL students continue to make progress in math and ELA. Our 16 special day class students are integrated into the general education program according to their IEPs, and data from general education teachers' assessments are incorporated in reporting progress toward IEP goals. A student's social and emotional development is assessed through observations of the child interacting with and responding to adults and children in the environment. Physical development is assessed through our PE program. A student's growth in these areas is reported to parents on the report card and during conferences and with progress reports.

Each family receives a school handbook and a district *Parent Information Packet*, containing content standards for each grade level. Teachers review grade-level standards at Back-to-School Night. The principal conducts a State-of-the-School meeting in the fall, at which she interprets our API, AYP and STAR scores and presents the current SPSA goals for student achievement. We regularly communicate to our community about student achievement at monthly Parents' Club and SSC meetings, and in monthly school newsletters. Parents receive frequent updated information about their child's progress towards meeting or surpassing the standards through conferences, phone calls, notes, emails, and student work in the weekly Monday envelope. All students receive a standards-based report card three times a year, and students at-risk receive monthly progress reports. Special education students receive progress reports aligned to their IEP goals. Parents of ELL students receive CELDT scores by mail, and GATE students' differentiated learning plans are reviewed each report card period. During formal parent conferences in December, teachers present and interpret data used to assess the student's performance, discuss and set learning goals based on performance, and devise action plans that support the student in meeting the goals. Although they are available, our 30 ELL and 58 FEP families have not required interpreters, as at least one parent is proficient in English. Spanish report cards and translated school documents are available upon request.

Theme 3 – Academic Excellence: Curriculum

How is curriculum selected and how is it focused on meeting the needs of all students, including those not yet proficient?

- 3.1 How is a balanced, comprehensive, standards-aligned core curriculum provided to *all* students?
- 3.2 How is curriculum enhanced for students in need of additional academic support?
- 3.3 How does the library media program support the teaching and learning of *all* students?
- 3.4 How does the technology program support the teaching and learning of *all* students?

MGE provides all students with a balanced, comprehensive, standards-aligned curriculum in math, English language arts (ELA), history-social science (HSS), physical education (PE) and visual and performing arts (VPA). Our annual Textbook Sufficiency Report ensures that all students are provided with SBE-adopted textbooks and instructional materials aligned to state

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standards. SDC, ELL, SWD and GATE students are provided a differentiated curriculum aligned to standards. Our district's textbook adoption cycle begins with community members, specialists, administrators and teachers volunteering to pilot materials to determine instructional effectiveness, representation of diverse populations, a career awareness component, and the use of community resources to enhance real-world experiences. School representatives on the committee make the recommendation for the final materials adopted by the district. Because of the magnitude of the recommendation, MGE's teachers volunteer for each piloting cycle. We have piloted the K-5 standards-based report card and the math and ELA series. K and 1st grade teachers currently are piloting an assessment for Concepts of Print, and we are piloting HSS materials in January, 2006.

Using district and site data (p13; par2), teachers reach consensus concerning research-based supplementary materials used to support at-risk students. *Mountain Math* and *Mountain Language* provide practice of math and ELA skills 1st-5th grade. *Hands on Equations* supplements algebra and functions for 3rd-5th students. Pattern blocks, unifix cubes and Marcy Cook tile activities assist K-5 application skills for algorithms, problem solving skills, patterns, number sense and math vocabulary. The HM ELA series is a language-rich curriculum that incorporates sequential skills development. This intensely comprehensive program contains support materials for addressing the needs of all learners in flexible rotation groups (p13;par4). Materials for introducing, reteaching and extending concepts, and for modifying the curriculum and homework for GATE, ELL, at-risk, SWD and SDC students are utilized. The HM math series provides challenge, practice, ELD and reteach materials, such as *Math Steps*, for differentiated class and homework assignments.

All classrooms have developmentally appropriate library materials, supporting ELA themes, math, science, H-SS and the arts curriculums. Teachers and Chevron volunteers read with students, modeling fluency, expression and critical thinking skills. During SSR, proficient students read for pleasure, while at-risk students practice for fluency with an adult. Teachers have aligned the hands-on FOSS K-5 science kits, which support all learning styles, to the standards. 2nd graders participate in the Invention Convention, which introduces students to the scientific method. 3rd-5th graders participate in the Science Fair. K-1st graders attend a weekly motor skills development class with a specialist. This research-based program supports reading readiness goals for K-1 and SDC students, and provides gross-motor intervention for at-risk 2nd-3rd graders. Teachers provide a developmental PE program for K-5 students, including those with Individual Student Health Plans (ISHP) and IEPs. 1st and 2nd graders are taught the rules and skills for play yard games, while 3rd graders run laps to increase endurance. 4th and 5th graders hone social skills in PE games. The PE specialist meets with our 4th-5th graders an hour a week and assigns skills-based homework, which is modified for students with ISHP. He assesses social and physical skills weekly and provides scores for report cards. The PE specialist is available throughout the year to assist with program alignment to the standards. A specialist provides skills-based lunchtime activities twice a week.

PFA standards are coupled with real world connections in weekly music instruction 1st-5th and during cross-curricular activities K-5. K students thrill their audience with poetry and drama in *Goldilocks*. 1st graders showcase talents with international songs ; 2nd graders do choral readings at the multicultural Harvest Tea; 3rd graders read music and play the song flute for a spring concert. Our 75 4th and 5th grade band and orchestra students participate in two public concerts. The 5th grade chorus produces a musical; last year an SDC student dazzled us in the lead role. 5th grade band students play at the city's Hospice Tree of Life lighting ceremony.

Teachers collaborate in August to create a yearlong matrix for math, ELA, H-SS, PE, the arts, and science, including life skills for social development, and projects and study trips for

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real world connections. Teachers collaborate on planning study trips with real world connections that are directly linked to the curriculum standards. Ks visit a local farm each fall to witness the harvest of foods. 1st graders walk to the local library, where they check out books with their city library cards. 2nd graders ride public transit for a tour and lunch at The Old Spaghetti Factory in down town Concord. 3rd graders tour places of historical significance in Contra Costa; 4th graders ride Amtrak to Old Sacramento to experience California history. 5th graders explore unique features of the Delta on the Brownlee, an environmental science boat. SDC students are integrated into all grade-level field trips. The matrix aligns curriculum to the standards and CDE frameworks, and supports developmental stages presented in Elementary Makes the Grade!. Matrices are shared cross-grade twice a year to assure program continuity and alignment to the standards. The K math theme sequence was realigned on the K matrix after teachers met with first grade teachers and discussed mastery of key standards having the greatest impact on 1st grade math skills. Teachers used the matrix to examine and link K-5 skills for research report writing. As a result, K students transition to 1st grade writing sentences with capitals and end punctuation. 1st graders write summary sentences to explain the first, next, then sequence of their Pond Life report illustrations. 2nd graders write a Family Heritage report with five well-developed paragraphs. Science reports in 3rd grade include three research resources and a bibliography. 4th graders' Indian reports include a title page, table of contents, and an Internet bibliography. 5th graders' state reports add outlines, summary notes, and five Internet and library sources. The reports are assessed using rubrics and criterion lists.

Volunteers are trained to work with individuals and small groups of students during the school day. After-school homework clubs are provided by MGE and the on-site day care. We conduct focused math and ELA before-school intervention programs for students at-risk. Teachers tutor students before and after school. Enrichment classes for early identified high achieving 1st and 2nd graders and GATE enrichment classes 3rd-5th are offered before and after school, as well as Parents' Club sponsored enrichment classes for all students. GATE students, identified in 3rd grade by STAR and RAVENS scores, have differentiated learning plans, which are reviewed with parents and students each trimester. They attend a weeklong science camp during the year and participate in GATE Summer School. At-risk students attend summer school for math and ELA. Speech, OT, APE and SDC students receive extended year services during summer. ELL students identified by the Home Language Survey are assessed annually with CELDT for writing, speaking and reading proficiency. Teachers utilize ELD standards and HM materials for lesson planning and assessing ELL students' achievement of grade-level standards. Progress history forms are updated annually to monitor ELL progress.

An updated library plan aligned to the SPSA is approved annually by the SSC. Our credentialed librarian, instructional media assistant and 32 parent volunteers ensure students have access to quality, up-to-date materials representing the cultural diversity of MGE. An annual needs assessment is distributed to staff, students and parents each spring. Based on the needs assessment, in October we purchased over \$2,500 worth of books and software that support our HM themes, science, math, HSS and art curriculum. Spanish picture books, books celebrating diversity, and books for all reading levels in all genres were also ordered. Our librarian meets with each class weekly and teaches research and study skills aligned to the library standards, and reading and language arts lessons that align to the HM grade-level themes. The librarian also teaches Internet research skills, the organization of a library and how to use the online public access catalog for access to 24,000 books in our collection. The librarian schedules author visits to showcase local talent and runs the 1,000 Page Reading Club, a K-5 reading incentive program. The library is arranged to accommodate our students with disabilities. Our librarian promotes the summer reading program at the public library, and

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encourages ELL parents to check out books in their native languages. The librarian is at MGE Wednesday through Friday and is available before, during and after school.

Our three-year technology plan integrates technology into the curriculum by providing four computers in each 3-5 classroom. 4th and 5th graders use the computers for Internet research, word processing, power point presentations and reteach/enrichment activities. Fifteen of our teachers in 2nd-5th explore websites such as Eduplace.com with students, projecting information using *TVators*. Additionally, students in 3rd-5th use class sets of *Alpha Smarts* for keyboarding practice and writing assignments, while nonverbal SDC students utilize *Intellitalk* software for writing. Students access classroom computers for math and ELA lessons in K-5 for enrichment or to reinforce concepts for at-risk, ELL, or special education students. We refer parents and students to educational Internet sites in our newsletters, during conferences, and through links on our school website.

Staff development scheduled using results from our CTAP2 survey addresses the classroom use of hardware and software for teacher and student productivity. Teachers will be trained this winter to use EduSoft, a software program for disaggregating data, and to post classroom information to their web pages. All teachers use email to communicate with peers and families and word processing for newsletters. Each teacher has a networked classroom computer with Internet access. The cafeteria is computerized, requiring students to swipe a card when purchasing a meal. Report cards and district forms can be completed online using *Omnifill* software. Our site budget reports and all purchasing are accessed online using IFAS software.

Theme 4 – Academic Excellence: Instructional Practices

How are instructional practices informed by student assessment and focused on meeting the needs of all students, including those who are not yet proficient?

- 4.1 How are *all* students provided with opportunities to meet rigorous standards?
- 4.2 How do teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to meet the needs of *all* students?
- 4.3 How is appropriate instruction provided to meet the academic and language needs of English learners?
- 4.4 How is appropriate instruction provided to meet the needs of students with disabilities and those with health issues?
- 4.5 How do administrators, teachers, and specialists ensure that the instructional program is delivered consistently over time?

We *expect* our students to achieve high standards and provide them with qualified staff, appropriate curriculum and immediate interventions to assure that they do. All MGE teachers are NCLB Highly Qualified, and over 90% are CLAD certified. They are trained to evaluate assessment data to identify the needs of students and to select lessons and materials that allow students to participate fully in the core curriculum. SWD and integrated SDC students are accommodated with materials at their performance levels. We purchased leveled-readers to supplement science and HSS curriculum, allowing all students access to content standards. Application of Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence theory ensures a balance of instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students. Whole class, direct instruction is coupled with cooperative, flexible groupings, and one-on-one instruction. Independent and collaborative practice allows students to foster responsibility and develop good work habits. Scaffolding further supports students in achieving standards. Small group instruction and peer-coaches are used K-5 in all subject areas. 5th grade buddies are assigned to K for reading and writing support. Teachers work with at-risk students during SSR to increase reading skills, and the RS

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teaches small groups of students in skills-based pullout clinics. Parent volunteers provide further assistance K-5 with mastery of skills. Before school intervention and summer school for ELA and math are provided for all students at-risk of retention. Tutoring and homework clubs are available after school for all students. We rescheduled four students into ELA blocks and two into math at lower grade levels in order to provide mastery of key standards. Two students receive reading instruction twice a day. Our SDC students are integrated into general education classes, where they receive assistance from an instructional aid, modified assignments, accommodated time for assignment completion, small group and peer tutoring.

ELL students participate in daily cross-grade ELD instruction using the HM intervention and ELD support materials. Susanna Dutro's researched-based frontloading strategies provide pre-teaching of concepts and vocabulary. SDAIE and GLAD strategies, Total Physical Response and realia are used during whole and small group lessons, because good teaching strategies increase learning for *all* students. We are moving away from the old model of the teacher asking a question and one student is called on to answer. Instead, we have implemented Kevin Feldman's researched-based total student engagement (TSE) strategies K-5 for engaging *all* students. All teachers employ TSE strategies such as Think Pair-Share, The Wave, Group Cloze Reading, and Think Write-Share using like-ability pairings. TSE supports SWD, at-risk and ELL students, as well as the learning styles of all students.

Our district-trained Literacy Initiative Team—two teachers and the RS—collaborated with teams from two elementary schools to produce a successful August Staff Development Day providing workshops on TSE strategies. These workshops resulted from data collected through a staff survey at the three schools. Using the coaching model, MGE and Woodside Elementary teachers schedule reciprocal observations to assist colleagues with full implementation of TSE strategies. Plans are underway for MGE and Woodside to expand this collaborative model of peer coaching from our sites to others in the district. All teachers being evaluated this year included a goal for TSE. The principal visits all classrooms and monitors the use of TES, while The Literacy Team continues to provide staff training, coaching and consultation to the staff (p 20;par1). In support of our implementation of TSE K-5, the Parents' Club purchased individual white boards for all students in November. Teachers reported immediate increase in the level of on-task student participation and accountability with the implementation of TSE. We expect to see an increase in math and ELA 2005-2006 STAR scores of all students, especially ELL, at-risk and SWD, as a result of consistently implementing TSE strategies.

Grade-level articulation cards are filled out at the end of the year for each student to facilitate a smooth transition from one grade level to the next. Gray intervention folders for the CUMs are generated for all students who are at-risk of not meeting standards. These folders contain specific information about school and family history, the identified areas of concern, and interventions and modifications past and current. The Care Team (CT: principal, RS, psychologist and speech and language pathologist) meets weekly for case reviews of at-risk students participating in RTI. Additionally, the CT can schedule an SST meeting to determine further recommendations for classroom interventions and modifications, behavior support services, observations by specialists, or assessment for special education. CT members are available to meet individually with teachers or parents for consultations and to do presentations at faculty meetings on topics of universal importance. To ensure that no student "falls through the cracks", the RS maintains a log of all students referred to the team. IEP meetings are conducted annually for all SDC, RS and speech students.

Theme 5 – Academic Excellence: Professional Development

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How is professional development organized as a system and how does student assessment frame the professional development of all staff to focus on improving the achievement of all students, including those not yet proficient?

- 5.1 How does the school/district plan for long-range professional development to ensure that *all* students reach proficient levels in core academic areas?
- 5.2 How does the school ensure that all certificated and classified staff participate in high quality professional development activities?
- 5.3 How does the school monitor the effectiveness of professional development activities?

We firmly believe that a well-supported teacher becomes an effective, life-long teacher, able to positively impact student achievement. Our district provides a comprehensive training program for administrators and teachers to support the full implementation of standards-based core curriculum. *Six Traits Writing, Hands on Equations, Early Literacy Development, Differentiated Instruction, GLAD, SADAIE, Language!, Read Naturally, and Increasing Test Scores*, are some workshops attended by our staff, who return from trainings and disseminate information. We have three district trainers on staff for the district's *Literacy Initiative* and district liaisons for GATE, technology, science, HSS, math and ELA. These teachers provide professional development for our staff and are influential in keeping us up-to-date with current research, materials, and instructional strategies that impact student achievement. Three teachers and the principal spent over 60 hours in district trainings last spring for The Literacy Initiative. The Team selected chapters from Bringing Words to Life for staff readings, and planned staff trainings for increasing students' vocabulary and reading skills through TSE strategies. The principal outlined an implementation timeline for TSE supported by SPSA funds for team planning days, consultations and peer coaching. In Feb 2005, the principal completed AB75 training for administrators, which correlates with CPSEL. Readings and website information are provided to staff based on the technology component of AB75. The principal attends monthly meetings for K-Adult managers, for elementary principals, and for the Concord High feeder schools; she utilizes information from these articulation meetings with the staff. All staff members have ample resources to attend off- and onsite trainings, and for participation in mentoring, collaboration and peer coaching. In the past two years, SSC set aside 20% of the new budget and the Parents' Club has included a line item in its budget for staff development supporting SPSA goals. Paraprofessionals have been trained in areas specific to the needs of the children in their programs. 50% of our paras are NCLB Highly Qualified; the other 50% are on track to qualify by June 2006. Support staff attends district trainings pertinent to their job descriptions. The district website offers online professional development classes for teachers.

The effectiveness of professional development is determined at faculty, grade and cross-grade-level, leadership, and SSC meetings through examining its impact on student achievement data. For example, in order to increase our ELA scores across the district, all teachers have been trained to implement Total Student Engagement (TSE) strategies. The principal is in classrooms throughout the year evaluating the implementation of TSE and providing additional support through materials and peer coaching. Although the teachers' responses to TSE has been positive, the actual impact of TSE on student achievement, especially for ELL, at-risk and special education students, will be evaluated using trimester RAP and Writing Prompt scores, report card scores in the spring and STAR scores in the fall.

Theme 6 – Academic Excellence: Instructional Leadership, Support, and Collaboration

How does the school promote a system of continuous peer support for educators and provide for all students to be taught by highly qualified staff?

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- 6.1 How does the school promote instructional leadership and provide support for teachers throughout their careers?
- 6.2 How does the school support new teachers?
- 6.3 How does the school provide a system of regular and frequent collaboration?

We are a community of learners who take pride in supporting each other as professionals. The expertise of our staff shines at faculty meetings, where teachers, the principal and support staff provide relevant trainings, pertinent staff development, and collegial support. Grade levels elect a team leader who meets with the principal monthly to assist in the planning, coordination and implementation of all aspects of our school programs. The team leader also serves as a mentor to colleagues and coordinates cross-grade articulations. All teachers serve on site committees—Safety, Curriculum and Instruction, Staff Development, Technology, Strategic Planning, Climate and Culture, and Social. Our shared-leadership model offers opportunities for teachers to achieve as committee chairmen and program coordinators for GATE, STAR, and Parent Education. Our Safety Committee chairman represents MGE at district planning meetings in preparation of our participation in the April 12th Multi-Casualty Drill taking place simultaneously at six schools in Concord. Student teachers from local universities are invited into our classrooms, where veterans share their expertise with the next generation of teachers. Last year we hired two talented student teachers who embody our commitment to excellence.

A cross-grade interview team selects new teachers according to skills, content knowledge, and educational philosophy. We also look for a sense of adventure and humor! The principal invites new hires to a meeting in August to discuss issues of school culture, to review the staff handbook, and to meet key parents and support staff. Each new teacher receives support from the administrator through monthly new-teacher meetings and extra funding for classroom and teaching materials. The Parents' Club also offers additional funding for new teachers. Team leaders provide mentoring, while colleagues furnish day-to-day support.

BTSA coaches guide first- and second-year teachers through the California Formative Assessment and Support System for Teachers process. New teachers serve on our site committees and attend site and district trainings (p20;par1). All teachers are evaluated using the California Standards for the Teaching Profession. Wednesday is a shortened day for students, providing the staff opportunities for professional development and collaboration. The faculty meets for in-service and trainings on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, grade-level planning and cross-grade-level meetings occur on the 2nd Wednesday, and committees meet on the 4th Wednesday. This year, grade-level meetings focus on standards-based reporting of student achievement, curriculum planning and assessment, and implementing components of the district's Literacy Initiative. Additionally, grade-level meetings are used to discuss and evaluate student achievement, interventions, best practices, and program effectiveness. The principal emails a weekly bulletin to the staff and works through team leaders as a way of minimizing the amount of time we use at faculty meetings for operation issues. The focus of our 1st and 3rd Wednesday meetings is on raising the performance levels of all students. Cross-grade-level meetings provide an opportunity for teachers to discuss key standards in ELA, math and writing, program continuity, and student performance at grade levels above and below. 5th grade teachers meet with 6th grade teachers in the spring and the principal attends monthly Concord High feeder school meetings to assure students a smooth transition and successful participation in secondary school. K teachers meet with the onsite Pre-K program director to discuss K standards.

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How do student support services focus on the success of all students, including those who are not yet proficient?

- 7.1 How does the school ensure that *all* students have access to student support services to maximize academic achievement?
- 7.2 How does the school effectively identify and support students in need of support services?
- 7.3 How are students and families supported as they transition from preschool, from grade to grade, and to middle school?

An encompassing support plan for all students, which addresses academic standards as well as behavior and attendance expectations and social development, is included in our Single Plan Student Achievement (SPSA) and Safety Plan, both of which are reviewed annually by our community. Our parent and staff handbooks outline procedures for intervening with students not meeting academic and behavior standards. Teachers work with students and parents before referring unresolved discipline issues to the principal, who writes citations and makes additional home contacts. SSTs convened for Behavior Support Plans. Teachers review the staff handbook at our first faculty meeting and teach behavior expectations to students. Parents are reminded of procedures at Back-to-School Night and in school newsletters. The site School Attendance and Review Team (office assistant, principal, parent and district representative) address attendance and tardy issues, which are outlined in the district Parent Information Packet and school handbook. Last year we referred only one persistent case for a SARB hearing. Our progressive discipline policy, clear expectations for students, and parent collaboration keep our suspension numbers low. Last year we suspended only four students for disruptive behavior. Reentry plans are reviewed for suspended students.

Teachers have ongoing collaboration with the principal and psychologist to discuss students' academic, emotional and behavior issues. Teachers can access the Care Team (CT) for identify strategies for addressing specific concerns, as part of the RTI model (p14;par1). One frequently used strategy is having the psychologist or other team member observe in the classroom and offer documented suggestions to the teacher. If a student continues to not make progress, we initiate the SST process. The CT follows up on each case and student progress is reviewed monthly. This protocol assures that no child falls between the cracks!

Teachers provide differentiated learning opportunities in the classroom based on assessments of students' needs, and teachers, specialists and volunteers provide intervention programs before, during and after school. STAR data, articulation cards (see below) and CUM checks provide teachers immediate information about each student's academic and social development. Grade-level teachers meet regularly (p21;par3) to outline and monitor plans for student support services. A 1st grade student was not at all prepared to engage in 1st grade curriculum. We collaborated on a plan for the student's academic success: he attends in a K classroom each morning for small group intervention in K readiness skills. He receives additional support in his 1st grade class, during 1st grade rotations, and during RTI clinics. In a matter of weeks he has gone from knowing 5 of 56 sounds to knowing 51! Ten 2nd and 3rd grade students with gross motor issues are integrated into our K-1 Motor Skills program. Out-of-grade-level math instruction is provided for two students. Our RS supervises the popular Lunch Bunch Club for students wanting a quiet place to read, draw, knit, play board games, or practice basic skills. The SLP and RS conduct social skills classes for autistic or socially awkward students. The psychologist and principal collaborate with teachers and parents to write and implement Behavior Support Plans. Our nurse writes Individual Student Health Plans for students needing accommodations. We do what it takes to help *each* child be successful!

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We have two SDC classes; one for physically handicapped (PH) students K-5, and one for K-1 severely handicapped (SH) students. SDC students are successfully integrated into the general education settings according to IEP goals. MGE shares a border with Shadelands Pre-School for developmentally delayed children, and Sunrise School, a K-5 school for emotionally disturbed children. Eight of our SDC students receive weekly medical therapy at Shadelands. Sunrise students preparing to return to their home schools are transitioned into general education in our classrooms. MGE teachers attend the IEPs for integrated Sunrise students, work closely with Sunrise staff and the families, and provide assessment data for IEPs. Our 4th-5th PE program integrates students from Sunrise who participate based on Behavior Support Plan goals. The District Student Services office provides referrals for counseling and medical resources, as does our Parent Liaison office. Our nurse organizes Operation School Bell for students needing clothing or shoes. Our free and reduced lunch program offers support for 60 eligible students. The RS offers families consultation for at-home interventions.

Parents choosing MGE for their child's education position a child on our waiting list at the age of three. We conduct parent education nights on early literacy for parents of our three and four year olds on the waiting list, and we distribute educational books to them from the NCLB publication website, such as *How to Read to your Preschool Child*. The director of Diane Adaire on-site day care (DA) attends SST and SSC meetings, participates at school functions and maintains ongoing communication with school staff. DA provides after school homework intervention, using grade-level standards. The parents of our K students are contacted personally by our community liaison and invited to attend school functions, including Back-to-School Bonanza and K orientation day. Articulation cards are prepared in May for each child and passed to the next year's teacher in August. These cards provide teachers with summary information regarding students' positions on the academic, social and behavioral continuums. Additionally, all teachers are responsible for knowing the content of their students' CUM files in order to maintain program continuity. Fifth grade teachers meet with 6th grade teachers in the spring to assure students a smooth transition to middle school (p11; par3).

Theme 8 – Support for Student Learning: Safe and Healthy Schools and Coordinated Health Services

How does the school focus on the health and well-being of all students to maximize academic achievement?

- 8.1 How do programs effectively meet the needs of all students regarding safety, health, nutrition, and well-being?
- 8.2 How does the school effectively promote socially appropriate behavior and positive relationships?
- 8.3 How does the school provide students and families with access to comprehensive health services?

Our school places high priority on the health and well-being of all students to ensure academic achievement. Our students participate in a PE program that emphasizes skill development, cooperation, sportsmanship and healthy lifestyles. SDC students participate in adaptive PE and motor skills classes. The *Healthy Kids Survey* is presented at SSC and reviewed at grade-level release days for lesson planning. Suggestions for healthy life style decisions are printed in the school newsletter. MGE's program policies support making healthy decisions: candy is not sold at our snack cart and students do not bring candy or soda to school. These healthy choices are reinforced in our PE program. 46% of MGE 5th graders aced all six standards on the CA Physical Fitness Report in 04-05. Intervention classes for at-risk

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students are held in the morning so children can go directly to breakfast. Last year our breakfast numbers doubled during intervention. It's a win-win situation.

Using the tenets of *Healthy Kids* to educate students about appropriate behavior, MGE has a zero tolerance for violence, crime, alcohol or drug use. Our comprehensive School Safety Plan is reviewed and updated annually by staff, parents, students, and community members, and presented to the Concord PD for input. The Parents' Club provides a traffic coordinator and two crossing guards to assist students before and after school. Health and safety information is distributed to families via teacher and principal newsletters, on our website, and at public meetings. At each grade level the health curriculum teaches students to make good choices regarding nutrition, life styles, safety and fitness. Red Ribbon Week activities, PEP, DARE and CHAMPS teach drug, tobacco and alcohol prevention. Community dentists emphasize good health by visiting classrooms and presenting information. 4th graders are growing an organic California salsa garden in boxes built by the boy scouts. 5th graders are prepared for physical and emotional changes through the Family Life program.

Our attendance rate of 96.4% indicates that students feel safe at MGE and enjoy coming to school. The district's anti-bullying policy is reviewed with students annually and parents are enlisted to reinforce this expectation with their children. Class meetings are held to teach students ways to resolve conflicts. Adults teach, model and reinforce positive behavior expectations. The first week of school, 1st-5th grade students attend an assembly to review behavior expectations and conflict resolution strategies. The assembly is followed-up with classroom activities and discussions. 1st grade students wrote summaries of the assembly, which were published in the class newsletter. 2nd graders compiled a book on making good choices, playing by the rules and being kind.

All students are taught to use I-Messages. Playground behavior and rules for games are taught during PE and reinforced by noon supervisors and the on-site day care provider. Students not following rules are benched or given a recess referral, for which the teacher makes a call home. Very few students are referred to the principal for inappropriate behavior. The teachers reinforce sportsmanship and positive peer interactions throughout the year in class meetings and during PE instruction. Expectations for behavior are in place for after school activities and evening gatherings. The second week of school 1st-5th grade students attend a school assembly regarding positive character traits and the staff uses the assembly to frame discussions about making good choices and displaying appropriate behaviors and attitudes. Bulletin boards remind students to display positive character traits, such as honesty, kindness, respect, fairness and responsibility. Opportunities to practice good character are provided thorough Star of the Week, peer and cross-age tutoring, assisting in the cafeteria, reading to younger students, serving on the Student Council, and working with SDC students. General education students are trained to push wheel chairs and eagerly volunteer to assist PH students at recess and lunch. 5th graders volunteer in our SH classroom, reading to students and assisting with art projects and recess games. This year 3rd and 4th graders are piloting two researched-based character trait programs to select one for adoption in 06-07.

A district nurse maintains accurate student health records, consults with staff and parents, conducts in-services, provides information about health related issues, and oversees the organization of the first aid room. The office staff is trained in basic first aid and administration of prescription medications. The school nurse develops an Individual Student Health Plan (ISHP) for students with chronic illnesses, such as asthma, diabetes, and allergies. The ISHP consists of physician's orders, parental consent, and a medical management plan specific to each student's needs. The ISHP is updated annually or as needed and copies are distributed to classroom teachers, placed in the First Aid Office, given to the cafeteria manager, and filed

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in the student's health record in the CUM. Office emergency cards for students with more serious health issues are flagged with medical alerts. The nurse trains staff in the administration of an EpiPen and glucagon, reviews all requests for administration of medications, regularly consults with the teachers and parents of said students, and performs vision and hearing screenings at regular intervals along with UC Berkeley's School of Optometry. Three paraprofessionals are trained to daily catheterize a student. A spring workshop teaches students to manage their asthma.

A site crisis intervention team is in place to respond in the event of a serious tragedy. The team follows district guidelines for crisis management, located in the School Safety Plan. Mental health services are accessed through the school psychologist, who follows a district plan for mental health referrals. We connect families to community resources such as Healthy Families Program, Contra Costa Health Services, Sight for Students, Lions for Vision, and The Children's Dental Project for medical and dental assistance. School Linked Services, Operation School Bell, and the Federal Lunch Program provide access to counseling, clothing, school supplies, and healthy food to keep our students on track for academic success.

Theme 9 – Support for Student Learning: School Culture and Engaging the School Community

How does the culture of the school actively promote the schoolwide vision of academic success for all students, including those who are not yet proficient, and purposefully engage parents and other community members in the implementation of the vision?

- 9.1 How does the culture of your school support the school's vision?
- 9.2 How does the school ensure that *all* students are connected to the school and community?
- 9.3 How does the school demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the community it serves?
- 9.4 How does the school promote two-way communication with families and community members?
- 9.5 How does the school ensure that community members are involved and contribute to the success of the school?
- 9.6 How does the school facility demonstrate the value placed on the students it houses?

The mutually supportive relationship of the parents and staff at MGE is the bedrock for a culture of high expectations. We hold ourselves accountable for the emotional, physical, social, and academic development of *all* children and offer them opportunities to connect with peers and adults. We provide all students before school intervention and after school enrichment programs, and real world connections (p16; par3). PEP, CHAMPS, and DARE teach students skills for making healthy choices and having positive interaction with peers. Non-violent resolutions to conflicts are taught in all grades and presented in school assemblies (p24;par2). Star of the Week, class jobs, recycling program, and Student Council provide leadership opportunities. 3rd-5th grade cafeteria and snack cart workers develop real world job skills. The Lunch Bunch Club and Social Skills classes provide adult and peer connections in a safe environment. Scouting and city sports teams provide after school activities.

Our annual parent survey takes the pulse of our community and helps us provide the best possible opportunities for family participation. Volunteers log over 8,000 hours of service each year, making a distinct impact on student achievement. They provide tutoring and small group support for ELL, SWD and at-risk students, assist the nurse with vision and hearing screenings and run our motor skills program, chaperone field trips, work in our library, volunteer to be

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room parents and serve on district and site committees. They assist with fundraisers, parent education night, and special events like Family Math, Art and Movie nights, the school carnival, Day on the Green BBQ, and the Winter Social. Parents lend their professional expertise to the curriculum by providing career-oriented lessons on such topics as health and safety, literature, science, math and the arts. KAPOW volunteers in 2nd and Jr. Achievement volunteers K-5 mentor students and provide career information. Local businesses provide donations for our events and community members serve as judges for our Science Fair. These partnerships have a positive impact on student learning. We connect with our community through school and teacher newsletters, conferences, and information and education nights, and our website. The SSC and Parents' Club provide meeting notes to the public on our web site and on an enclosed bulletin board outside the office. Our website has a direct link to the district website, where parents can find information about educational opportunities like the annual Parenting Conference and Adult Education classes. In respect of multilingual differences, Spanish-speaking staff members are available to assist families. Home cultures are celebrated K-5 in our music, art, reading and social studies programs. For example, Ks have a Family Traditions day; 2nd graders make heritage doll; 3rd graders sew family quilts. ELL parents are important contributors to and participants in these projects and other school events.

Communications with Pre-K, middle and high school programs are on-going. It is through consistent articulation that our school's culture of high academic and behavior standards and high parent involvement is embedded in our community. Classroom environments reflect a standards-based program. Focus walls, reading and writing strategies, math and ELA standards and student work adorn classroom walls. Walk in the newly renovated office and you are greeted with student work; art is on display in the MU. Parent surveys indicate that 98% of our families are pleased with their child's experiences at MGE. We believe that a clean, organized and welcoming campus encourages attendance, and that regular attendance translates into achievement. Even with a long flu season, our attendance rate for 04-05 was 96.4%. Messages in our newsletters and on the marquee emphasize attendance; students with perfect attendance receive ribbons and are applauded in our newsletters.

Students from eight cities in our far-flung district attend MGE. Clearly, we are a school of choice, not a neighborhood school, yet we foster a genuine sense of community. New families are contacted by our community liaison and invited to school events, which are also announced in our newsletters, and on our website. Ks and their families are invited to an August orientation to meet the teachers. On the first day of school, parents and preschool siblings meet for conversation over coffee, juice and donuts donated by Starbucks and Safeway. Started two years ago, this popular event fosters a sense of community for our commuting families. Day on the Green brings hundreds of family members to MGE for a BBQ. This Thanksgiving we collected over 1,700 pounds of food for The Contra Costa Food Bank. Our Winter Social pancake breakfast permits students to shop for inexpensive holiday gifts, while parents purchase donated baked goods at The Great American Bake Sale to aid Hurricane Katrina victims. Our custodians work diligently to maintain a safe, clean and appealing campus environment. District maintenance crews respond quickly for major repair. Fresh paint on our doors reminds students and visitors that *we care* about what goes on inside. Our Garden Club and three scout troops maintain a welcoming landscape. Students create colorful wall tiles that are mounted on the outside wall of our MU room. Visitors to MGE are struck with the pride we have for our school. During a November Brownie meeting, a visiting parent commented to the scout leader, "I just *had* to call my husband to tell him about the beautiful tiles and flags and flowers at your school. You guys really take pride in your school!" Yes, we certainly do!