

# ISCI Showcase Celebration

Celebrate the accomplishments  
of the schools involved in the  
Inclusive Schools Climate Initiative



Tuesday May 27, 2014  
11:00a.m.-2:30p.m.



Cook Campus Center, Rutgers University  
Multi-purpose Room C  
59 Biel Road, New Brunswick, NJ 08901



*Building A Safe and Supportive School Climate  
With a Focus on Students with Disabilities*

Sponsored by  
New Jersey Department of Education,  
Office of Special Education Programs  
in collaboration with  
The Center for Applied Psychology at Rutgers University

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*Building safe and supportive school climates  
with a focus on students with disabilities*

## Welcome

Dear Colleagues and Guests,

Thank you for joining us to celebrate the accomplishments of the schools involved in the Inclusive Schools Climate Initiative (ISCI). ISCI has been developed through our partnership with the Office of Special Education Programs at the New Jersey Department of Education, and has been focused on working with selected schools to promote school environments that best support the inclusion of students with disabilities. In June 2013, we completed a pilot of ISCI which included the involvement 9 Cohort 1 and 9 Cohort 2 schools.

Currently, 6 schools are involved in Cohort 2 of ISCI, 2 middle schools, 1 intermediate school, and 3 elementary schools. Each participating school has been involved in the formulation of an ISCI leadership team, the administration of an inclusion-focused assessment of school climate, and the development and implementation of a School Climate Improvement Plan (SCIP) based on feedback from the assessment results. SCIP's are unique to each school and include goals and a range of activities that are designed to promote change or sustain aspects of school climate that best support inclusion.

Today, we will have the pleasure of hearing team members from each of the Cohort 2 schools present examples of the many rich activities that they have implemented as part of their participation in ISCI. We will also have a wonderful opportunity to hear Dr. Charlene Staley-Evans from the Office of Special Education Programs, NJDOE, provide our keynote address and speak about the importance of inclusive education. We hope that today's event allows you to make new connections with colleagues as well as spark some great ideas for you to bring back to your own schools and communities.

I am also pleased to share that we are continuing to see some promising survey outcomes across the Cohort 2 Schools (as we did for Cohort 1), including improvements in teacher perceptions of teacher-student relationships, sense of connectedness, student-student relationships, teacher experience and work environment, student behaviors, inclusive environment, bullying and teasing involving students with disabilities, and disability awareness.

Lastly, I would also like to welcome our new Cohort 3 School Teams, many of whom are here today and have already begun the climate survey phase of ISCI. We are so pleased to be working with you.

This program contains further details about ISCI and descriptions of each school's accomplishments to serve as a reference for your visit today. Please enjoy this opportunity to learn, share, engage, and network, and once again, thank you for being here to celebrate and support the accomplishments of the ISCI schools in creating more inclusive school climates.

Sincerely,



Bradford C. Lerman, Psy.D., Director, ISCI  
Center for Applied Psychology, Rutgers University

## Showcase Agenda

11 a.m.	Meet the Schools
11:25 a.m.	Welcome and Introductions
11:30 a.m.	School Presentations (Round 1)
	11:30 to 11:50 Brigantine ES
	11:50 to 12:10 Eleanor Rush IS
	12:10 to 12:30 Thomas Jefferson MS
12:30 p.m.	Networking Break
1:00 p.m.	Keynote Address: “The Power of Inclusion” Dr. Charlene Staley-Evans, Bureau Manager, Program Development, Office of Special Education Programs, NJ Department Of Education
1:15 p.m.	School Presentations (Round 2)
	1:15 to 1:35 Thomas Sharp ES
	1:35 to 1:55 Maxson MS
	1:55 to 2:15 Livingston Park ES
2:15 p.m.	Closing

### **Dr. Charlene Staley-Evans Biography**

Charlene Staley-Evans is currently the Manager for the Bureau of Program Development in the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education. In this position, Dr. Evans is responsible for the development of special education programs that support students from preschool to transition to post secondary education and career. Before coming to the state department of education, Dr. Evans was an assistant professor at Montclair State University in the College of Education. She began her career as a teacher in Hillsborough County, Tampa, Florida where she taught in a range of settings including a special school, resource room and self-contained classroom. Dr. Evans was also a resource consultant, specializing in specific learning disabilities and attention deficit disorders for the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource Center, Hillsborough for the Florida Department of Education where she provided professional development and technical assistance to teachers. Dr. Evans earned her Doctoral and Master of Arts degrees in Education Leadership and Policy Studies from the University of South Florida and her Bachelor of Arts degree in Exceptional Child Education at the University of Florida.

## Participating Cohort 2 ISCI Schools by District

**Brigantine Public Schools**  
**Brigantine, NJ**  
Brigantine Elementary School

**Cinnaminson Township Public Schools**  
**Cinnaminson, NJ**  
Eleanor Rush Intermediate School

**Collingswood Public Schools**  
**Collingswood, NJ**  
Thomas Sharp Elementary School

**Fair Lawn Public Schools**  
**Fair Lawn, NJ**  
Thomas Jefferson Middle School

**North Brunswick Township Schools**  
**North Brunswick, NJ**  
Livingston Park Elementary School

**Plainfield Public Schools**  
**Plainfield, NJ**  
Maxson Middle School

# ISCI Consultation Process

## Leadership Teams

Each school's involvement in ISCI begins with administrative support and the development of a leadership team engaged in promoting successful inclusion practices and a positive school climate. This is achieved through collaboration between each school's ISCI leadership team and Rutgers ISCI consultants to assess school climate and develop a unique data-driven plan. As a community of learners, leadership teams also engage in networking opportunities to share ideas, resources, strategies, and best practices with one another. In addition, a new mentoring program, "Colleagues for Colleagues," has been introduced to extend this support across ISCI cohorts so that schools who have already experienced ISCI can give support and guidance to schools newly involved.

## Assessment

Addressing the needs of students with disabilities in all aspects of school life can be challenging. Each school participating in ISCI engages in an assessment of their school climate through survey and interviews. This process is able to help schools identify and increase their understanding of unique school climate factors, practices, and programs that influence opportunities for students with disabilities to be included with their general education peers throughout the school day.

### Surveys

ISCI surveys demonstrate high reliability and are valid measures of constructs salient to aspects of school climate and inclusion. Statistical analyses conducted on the aggregated ISCI survey data (i.e., data from all ISCI schools) support previous analyses and reflect the following constructs: interpersonal relationships, inclusion, student behaviors and attitudes, work environment, and parent-school relationship. The ISCI assessment design allows for specific comparisons to be made across the groups participating in the assessment process. The surveys have been administered online through SurveyMonkey® to students, administrators, teachers, staff, and parents/guardians at each of the ISCI schools.

### Interviews

Interviews have been conducted with teachers, counselors, child study team members, school psychologists, classroom aides, administrators, parents, and other stakeholders to provide an added perspective on inclusion practices and overall school climate.

## **Feedback**

The assessment results are summarized for each ISCI school and displayed in a School Climate Profile, highlighting results by surveyed groups (e.g., students, teachers, certified staff, etc.), comparing results across groups, and summarizing themes that have emerged from interview data. A feedback meeting is setup with each ISCI school leadership team where assessment results are reviewed and team members begin to react to the findings, recognize and prioritize aspects of school climate that are strengths and areas of improvement for the school, and brainstorm ways to sustain efforts that are working as well as to address priority areas of concern. Team members utilize a brainstorming tool developed through ISCI to assist with the documentation of these ideas.

## **School Climate Improvement Plan (SCIP) Development and Implementation**

Utilizing the survey results and the culmination of brainstorming ideas across the leadership team, each team develops a School Climate Improvement Plan (SCIP), which is a documented, goal-driven, action plan that team members commit to implement for the school year. Goals may be long-term in nature; however, documented activities are focused on a single school year. SCIP development includes the following components:

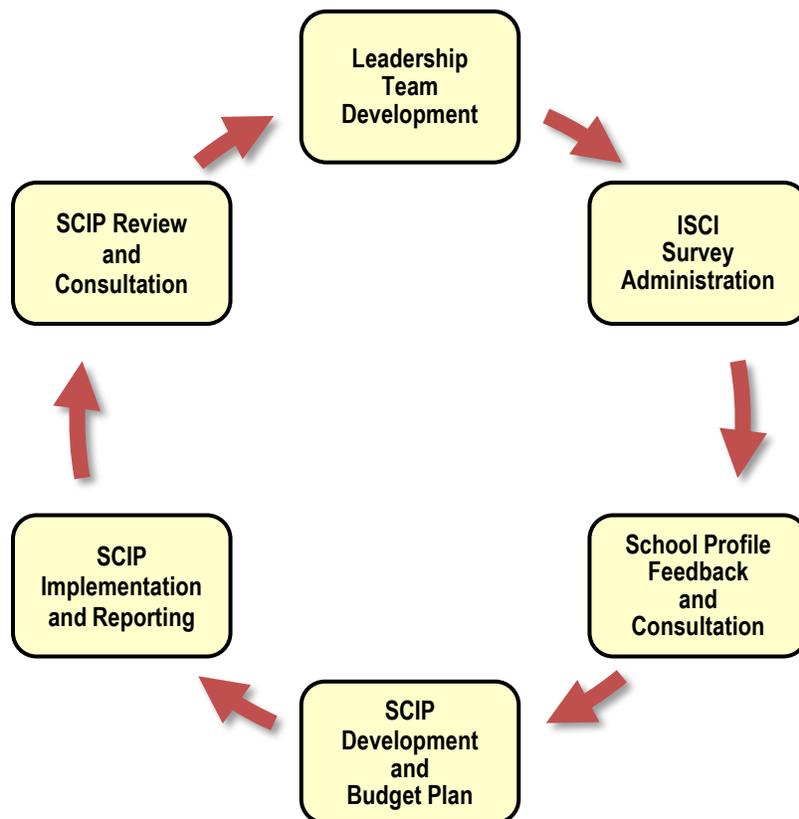
- Measurable goals related to inclusion and school climate improvement;
- An evaluation plan to determine how success for each goal will be measured;
- The identification of existing school activities, practices, programs, and strategies related to inclusion and school climate, their perceived success, and selection of strategies to continue;
- The addition of new activities, practices, programs, and strategies, used in combination with existing strategies, that support newly identified goals;
- A timeline to complete each activity, practice, program, and strategy indicating target dates and persons responsible; and
- A signature of commitment to the plan by each team member

SCIP implementation begins simultaneously with completion of the plan and documentation of each completed activity is indicated on the SCIP throughout the year. The specific strategies, activities, and programs developed through each SCIP are highlighted in each school's presentation today as well as in the description section of this program.

## Reassessment, Feedback, and SCIP Review

Each ISCI school engages in reassessment of school climate through the use of the ISCI School Climate Survey and the interview process. Feedback is provided using an updated School Climate Profile and includes a comparison of the previous year's results with the current year's results. Similar to the initial feedback meeting, a follow-up feedback meeting occurs, facilitated by a Rutgers ISCI consultant, and leadership team members engage, once again, in reacting to the data, prioritizing issues, and brainstorming ways to sustain efforts that are working and address areas of need. The SCIP is then reviewed, goals are adjusted as necessary, and practices, programs, and strategies are documented in the SCIP.

## ISCI Model



## School Accomplishments

ISCI schools have been successful in implementing an array of activities (practices, programs, and strategies) to meet the specific inclusion and school climate needs of their schools. Through the assessment and SCIP development process, schools were also able to implement these strategies consistent with the culture of their schools, honoring the customs, beliefs, language, and values of their schools. Many of the activities documented in SCIPs and implemented throughout the participating schools fit into the following major goal categories: 1) improving relationships, 2) increasing awareness and knowledge of disabilities 3) increasing parent/guardian support and involvement, and 4) improving engagement of the whole school community. Notably, the strategies, activities, and programs that schools have chosen to implement in relation to these goals addressed students, staff, and parents/guardians, and have included initiatives such as:

### **Student-Focused**

- Inclusive: safety patrol, hall monitors, clubs, electives, homerooms, lunch period, recess, physical education
- Classroom libraries to educate students about disabilities
- Literature with peer with disability as main character
- Disability Awareness Symposium/Day/Assembly
- Expansion of playground to foster inclusive play at recess
- School-wide Olweus Bullying Prevention Program
- Pen pal program between general education and special education students
- Lunch with principal as reward for good character
- Staff-student basketball game
- Student participation in original inclusive school video
- Literature/lessons/assemblies with anti-bullying message

### **Staff-Focused**

- PLC with focus on students with disabilities
- Quarterly staff breakfasts
- Staff development on strengthening staff relationships
- Staff development with special services to provide training on inclusion, IEP's, and accommodations
- Staff development on classroom management, co-teaching

### **Parent/Guardian-Focused**

- Family Fun Night to promote science/STEM Academy
- PTA development

These and many more initiatives will be shared during today's showcase and in this program.

## Data Outcomes

To date, for both cohorts, positive changes in teacher perception emerged in several survey areas, such as relationships, teacher experience and work environment, inclusive environment, and bullying/teasing involving students with disabilities. Examples of positive changes on the ISCI survey for Cohorts 1 and 2 Schools are summarized on the following tables.

### Cohort 1 Schools

Cohort 1 Schools completed their final administration of the ISCI Surveys which provided each school with 3 data sets: 2011 Phase 1 Baseline, 2012 Phase 2 Mid-Implementation, and 2013 Phase 3 Post Implementation. This allowed each school the opportunities to create, implement, and review their SCIPs for 2 full school years.

Examples of positive changes in the Cohort 1 schools from Phase 1 (2011) to Phase 3 (2013)  
All items within a factor may not have attained Effect Sizes  $\geq 0.25$

<u>Teacher Outcomes by Factor</u> <i>Number of items per factor</i>	Percentage of schools based on 9 Cohort 1 Schools (n)	Effect Size Range $\geq 0.25$ Substantively Important-WWC <sub>1</sub>	Percentile Increase
Teacher-Student Relationship (Behavior) 5 items	78%(7)	0.26 to 0.80	+10 to +29
Teacher Experience (Supportive) 5 items	78%(7)	0.28 to 0.56	+11 to +21
Student Positive School Behavior 6 items	67%(6)	0.28 to 0.95	+11 to +33
Bullying/Teasing Involving Students with Disabilities 2 items <sub>2</sub>	67%(6)	0.30 to 0.58	+12 to +22
Teacher Experience (Behaviors) 6 items	67%(6)	0.27 to 0.58	+11 to +22
Inclusive Environment 4 items	56%(5)	0.30 to 0.77	+12 to +28
Student Negative School Behaviors 3 items <sub>2</sub>	56%(5)	0.40 to 0.79	+16 to +29
Family and School 2 items	56%(5)	0.25 to 0.45	+10 to +17
Disability Awareness 1 item	56%(5)	0.32 to 0.76	+13 to +28
Work Environment (Relationships) 4 items	44%(4)	0.27 to 0.72	+11 to +26
Teacher-Student Relationship (Empowerment) 4 items	44%(4)	0.26 to 0.68	+10 to +25
Student-Student Relationships 5 items	44%(4)	0.26 to 0.82	+10 to +29
Work Environment (Role Complexity) 5 items	44%(4)	0.25 to 0.67	+10 to +25

<sub>1</sub> What Works Clearinghouse

<sub>2</sub> Reverse scored

## Cohort 2 Schools

Cohort 2 Schools have completed the 2012 Phase 1 Baseline and the 2013 Phase 2 Mid-Implementation of the ISCI Survey with the Phase 3 Post-Implementation to take place in Spring 2014. In Fall 2014, the Cohort 2 Schools will receive the survey data feedback with opportunities to review and revise their plans for the 2014-2015 academic year.

Examples of positive changes in the Cohort 2 schools from Phase 1 (2012) to Phase 2 (2013)  
All items within a factor may not have attained Effect Sizes  $\geq 0.25$

<u>Teacher Outcomes by Factor</u> <i>Number of items per factor</i>	Percentage of schools based on 7 Cohort 2 Schools <sub>1</sub> (n)	Effect Size Range $\geq 0.25$ Substantively Important-WWC <sub>2</sub>	Percentile Increase
Teacher-Student Relationships (Empowerment) 4 items	100%(7)	0.26 to 0.61	+10 to +23
Sense of Connectedness 5 items	100%(7)	0.30 to 1.36	+12 to +41
Student-Student Relationships 5 items	86%(6)	0.32 to 0.67	+13 to +25
Teacher Experience (Behaviors) 6 items	86%(6)	0.25 to 0.65	+10 to +24
Student Positive School Behavior 6 items	86%(6)	0.25 to 0.72	+10 to +26
Work Environment (Relationships) 4 items	86%(6)	0.25 to 0.64	+10 to +24
Teacher Experience (Supportive) 5 items	71%(5)	0.27 to 0.78	+11 to +28
Inclusive Environment 4 items	71%(5)	0.27 to 0.61	+11 to +23
Bullying/Teasing Involving Students with Disabilities 2 items <sub>3</sub>	57%(4)	0.29 to 0.67	+11 to +25
Special Education 2 items	57%(4)	0.25 to 0.40	+10 to +16
Disability Awareness 1 item	57%(4)	0.29 to 1.15	+11 to +37
Family and School 2 items	57%(4)	0.32 to 1.01	+13 to +34
Student Participation in Deciding Rules 1 item	57%(4)	0.50 to 0.96	+19 to +33

<sub>1</sub>Schools with teacher data for both 2012 and 2013

<sub>2</sub>What Works Clearinghouse-Institute of Education Science-<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

<sub>3</sub>Reverse scored

## **Brigantine Public Schools Brigantine Elementary School**

### ***Narrative from Our NJ School Performance Report:***

The Brigantine Elementary School services a multicultural enrollment of 440 students in Preschool through Grade 4. The Mission Statement of our District that was developed by the Strategic Planning Committee reads, “The Mission of the Brigantine Elementary School is to create world class public schools that nurture the development of productive citizens who will be prepared to take their places as contributing members of 21st Century society with the skills and knowledge necessary to nurture, perpetuate, and support the principles of American democracy.” In fulfilling this Mission, the school continues to earn the highest state and national educational honors for model programs and student achievement.

A major goal of the school’s mission and Safe School’s initiative is to infuse character education into the curriculum to help children respect themselves, others, and reduce bullying and violence. The school has received numerous national and state recognition awards for its exemplary programs including a 2011-2013 New Jersey School of Character Award, a National School of Character Award, and the Boyer Center Award as having the #1 Best Practice in the United States for character education.

In 2012-13 the school was selected to participate in the Inclusive Schools Climate Initiative with Rutgers University. The program is designed to develop an inclusive, safe, and supportive school environment through the focus on the inclusion of all students, and the promotion of core values. As part of this program the entire staff was trained in the nationally recognized Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. Through this program, children in all classes held bullying prevention meetings twice a month. As a result, we have seen an even more positive school environment and a reduction in bullying.

In October, 2012 Hurricane Sandy greatly affected so many of our children and staff causing families to become displaced. Our school family came together to support each other in this unprecedented time of need. We opened our school kitchen at night feeding hundreds of families. We raised thousands of dollars and donated food, clothing, and other necessities to those in need. Our sister National Schools of Character from across the nation supported our families with gift cards, money, and clothing. Although Sandy caused havoc and displacement, which still is impacting families one year later, it also brought out the best in all of us, making our school community stronger today than ever before. We are Brigantine Strong.

The Brigantine Police Department introduced an Anti-Bullying/Safe Schools program entitled, “Brigantine Union of Cops and Schools” (B.U.C.S.) The program included classroom presentations and programs televised over our school station about bullying, safety, and

respect. Through this program, police officers frequently ate lunch with our children helping to build a bond of respect.

Our school also provides family programs. In 2012-14 a program called, “Strengthening Families” sponsored by Atlantic Prevention Resources provided family meals and professional workshops for parents and children. Additionally the PTA and our staff sponsored a Family Fitness night attended by well over 100 families.

One of the highlights of the school year was “Arts Night 2013.” The program is a multicultural, cross-curricular approach to Arts Education. Through this thematic approach to the arts, children in grades K-4 learn about the geography, history, and culture of various geographic areas around the world in a 5-year rotation. In 2013, the Specials Area curriculum focused on the continent of Africa. The year-long multicultural character education program concluded in June with a community event called “Arts Night 2013: An African Safari.” At this event, attended by 1,500 people, approximately 5,000 pieces of children’s artwork were displayed, 200 students performed in costume, and more than 200 community volunteers put it together.

Skyping is an important cultural project the children at the Brigantine Elementary school participate in. For the past 5 years, our students have been Skyping Mrs. Cass Parker and her 5th grade students at the Nelson Intermediate School in Nelson, New Zealand. While sharing cultural features, the Brigantine children were introduced to Purple Cake Day, a non-profit organization started by the Kenbe La Foundation to help schools and children in need. The children in Brigantine and the kids at New Zealand’s Nelson Intermediate School used Skype to jointly celebrate their second Purple Cake Day. Through this cooperative international relationship, the New Zealand children invited our school to represent the USA in this charitable venture. As a result, 400 Brigantine students spent two weeks in February and March learning about Purple Cake Day in their art, music, and technology classes. Our staff and students raised money to support a poverty stricken school in Kenya, Africa. Additionally, the cooperating teacher in New Zealand, Mrs. Cass Parker, came to the Brigantine School District on an educational trip to learn about the United States and share her New Zealand culture with our students. During May, the students of Brigantine Elementary learned about the Maori people of New Zealand from Mrs. Cass. Also, as part of our study of Africa, our school hosted the principal of a school in Uganda that our community has sponsored.

The school continues to promote the use of technology. Through the Brigantine Elementary School Television [BEST] programs, students write, direct, and air daily telecasts to every classroom in the school, producing outstanding educational programs for our student body. The BEST program has earned a New Jersey Department of Education Best Practice award for Technology. Our students again won top prizes in the State Invention contest for the 30th consecutive year.

In 2012-2013 the art teacher coordinated a virtual classroom for students in Kindergarten through Grade 4 called ArtiTech Academy. This program is a virtual art and technology class that is offered to students who are interested in combining both subjects at home in a virtual

classroom on their own computing systems. Through this program children communicate online by combining technology, art, and culture to expand learning by using the internet as a remote distance learning tool.

The administration and staff thank our children, parents, and members of the community for their exceptional involvement and support in helping our school earn state and national honors.

***Additional Information from Our ISCI School Leadership Team:***

The Brigantine Elementary School provides services to a multicultural enrollment of 423 students in Kindergarten through 4th Grade. We also have a half-day Preschool program. In fulfilling our mission, the school continues to earn the highest state and national educational honors for model programs and student achievement.

A major goal of the school's mission and Safe School's Initiative is to infuse character education into the curriculum to help children respect themselves, others, and reduce bullying and violence. Thanks to the Inclusive Schools Climate Initiative, we are successfully involved in Year 2 of the implementation of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. The school received its 5th consecutive state award for exemplary programs in character education. Our school was selected as a 2011-2013 New Jersey School of Character and a National School of Character. The school previously was selected by the Boyer Center as having the #1 Best Practice in the United States for Character Education.

***Overview of Our ISCI Goals:***

Our goals, which were based on the results of our Spring 2013 ISCI Survey and directly related to our activities, were:

- To improve student-to-student connectedness, increase trust, and develop a sense of community
- To assist students in developing awareness and acceptance of students with disabilities.
- To support educational team members in developing work relationship skills so that they can collaborate to improve learning outcomes and experience increased satisfaction with the work environment.

### ***Description of Our Showcase Activities:***

- Taking the “Dis” Out of Disabilities Program-In presenting this disability awareness program, Dr. Paul Wichansky emphasizes the critical issues of tolerance and respect and relates these topics to self-esteem and the development of a "Yes! I Can" attitude. By sharing his life experiences, he uses himself as an example to help inspire students to learn from their mistakes and failures and, in the process, helps them realize that success is readily available with hard work and determination. Dr. Paul, a member of the speaker’s bureau, A Vision in Motion, conducted 3 assemblies and presented to our Special Education Parent Advisory Group.
- The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program-This program prevents or reduces bullying in schools. All of our students follow 4 anti-bullying rules. We hold 2 class meetings a month. All classes discuss the same topic and engage in the same activities. All staff members have a copy of the lesson so that everyone knows what concept we are working on promoting together. We all wear blue and white on “Olweus Days.” In addition, we ran a poster contest to display the anti-bullying rules; the posters made by our students will be distributed to the local community businesses to promote an anti-bullying philosophy.
- Strengthening Families-Staff from the Brigantine School District worked with staff from Atlantic Prevention Resources to invite families of our students to attend trainings to further develop their parenting skills. Seven evening training sessions were conducted. Childcare was provided and there were opportunities for the families to engage in activities separately and together.
- Bubbles for Autism-April is Autism Awareness Month. In our district the majority of students with autism attend programs within the district. Prior to Bubbles for Autism Day, students are encouraged to make posters to carry at the walk with messages regarding autism. Story books are available to teachers to share information about autism with their students. The entire school participates. Everyone goes to the outside track. They walk around the track with their posters and blow bubbles to honor and recognize those with autism and their families.
- Reading Buddies-Students with disabilities from our middle school come to our Preschool class for students with disabilities once a week for Reading Buddies. The middle school students select a book and are partnered with a preschooler to share their love for reading.
- Staff Breakfast-Four times a year, we have a staff breakfast before school to assist in fostering a spirit of collegiality among school personnel.

***Our Positive Results:***

As a result of our efforts, we have observed many positive outcomes. For example, 100% of our in-district students in special education are included for part of the school day. We have increased awareness of disabilities in the school and community. We have also further developed a sense of camaraderie and friendship among the staff.

**District-wide ISCI activities:**

- Taking the “Dis” Out of Disabilities Program
- Olweus Bullying Prevention Program
- Bubbles for Autism
- Reading Buddies

## **Cinnaminson Township Public Schools Eleanor Rush Intermediate School**

### ***Narrative from Our NJ School Performance Report:***

Eleanor Rush Intermediate School is a community of learners where the best interest of students comes first. It is home to approximately 540 students in Grades 3-5. Our goal is to produce literate, confident and responsible students in a building that is safe and has high expectations for learning.

Teamwork between the school and the home is fostered to enable both academic and behavioral success. Our primary goal is to have each student achieve to his or her full potential. To accomplish this goal, good character of students and staff is essential.

We have a dedicated staff that truly believes all students can learn to high levels of achievement. Teachers refine their lessons to raise the level of their instruction in order to increase student achievement. Teachers incorporate a balance of whole class, small group, and individual instruction to differentiate and best meet the needs of all students. All teachers meet the requirements of a Highly Qualified Teacher.

Our curriculum is driven by the New Common Core State Standards. Students receive instruction in language arts literacy, mathematics, science, and social studies. Special Area teachers instruct in art, music, physical education, library, health, Spanish and technology. There are a wide variety of support programs that accommodate student needs as well as additional support in reading and math, special education, gifted and talented, English as a Second Language, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy.

In language arts literacy, a Balanced Literacy Approach to learning is incorporated. Balanced Literacy includes interactive read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, writing, word work, and spelling. Students listen, speak, read, write, and view daily in all subject areas. To reach the standards and benchmarks at each grade level, teachers use “The Units of Study for Teaching Writing in Grades 3-5” by Lucy Calkins and the “StoryTown” reading program published by Houghton Mifflin/Harcourt.

In mathematics, instruction focuses on real-life problem solving, a balance between teacher-directed instruction and opportunities for open-ended explorations, and applying technology. Students explain their mathematical thinking and solve problems in more than one way. The “Envisions” math program published by Scott Foresman/Addison Wesley enables students to experience success in the five mathematical strands: operations and

algebraic thinking, numbers and operations in Base Ten, number and operations-fractions, measurement and data and geometry.

Eleanor Rush Intermediate School offers a number of extra-curricular clubs and activities that are held after school hours, including: Student Council, instrumental and vocal music groups, intramural/athletic programs, Art Club, Butterfly Club, Unity Club.

***Additional Information from Our ISCI School Leadership Team:***

Eleanor Rush Intermediate School is a community of learners where the best interest of students comes first. It is home to approximately 540 students in Grades 3-5. Our goal is to produce literate, confident and responsible students in a building that is safe and has high expectations for learning.

***Overview of Our ISCI Goals:***

Our ISCI goals were to continue to increase students' knowledge and understanding about students with disabilities. Another goal was to continue to reduce the number of HIB referrals from students bullying other students who have a disability. Finally, our 3rd ISCI goal was to continue to sustain the current Character Education program by making the students aware of the attributes or actions of people who exemplify good character. We would also like to see the students who have disabilities demonstrate and maintain the same good character.

***Description of Our Showcase Activities:***

We have focused on developing civically competent students through character and disability awareness programs. Our highlighted ISCI activities are:

- Memorial Garden
- Books promoting awareness for students with special needs
- Good character activities
- Character Attitudes of the Month
- Recognition of good character
- Classroom Lessons on "Conflict, Compromise, and Mediation," "Types of Bullying and What to do if Bullied," and "The Role of the Bystander."
- Halloween Parade
- Unity Day
- 300 Club
- Literature with character education and disability awareness themes
- A focus on anti-bullying education
- Memorialized what good character looks like by creating a mural on wall of our school's all purpose room

- “Power of One” Anti-Bullying Assembly
- Respect Assembly
- LCD television that displays announcements and photos from the school year

For the 2nd year, our school has added to our school library novels that focus on peers with both “visible” and “invisible” disabilities. Often, a peer with a disability is the hero or heroine of the novel. Exposing all of our students to this literature has provided an opportunity for them to increase their awareness about people with disabilities as they view the world through the eyes of these characters.

We are continuing to research various novels in the library so that we can expose all students at each grade level to different types of disabilities. We are hoping that by teaching disability awareness through literature, students will understand more and become more accepting. Implementation was done through class discussion, projects, and activities. Last year we purchased class sets of “There’s a Boy in the Girl’s Bathroom,” “The Chalk Box Kid,” and “Fourth Grade Rats.” These novels have been used in the 4th and 5th Grade classrooms in which discussions took place about inclusion of all students, being a proactive bystander to prevent bullying, and treating others as you would want to be treated. “Time for Kids” articles have supplemented these discussions. We also purchased several copies of the novel “Wonder,” which was used in classrooms in the beginning of the school year to set the tone for including all students (special education students in the self-contained classroom were present in these discussion within their homerooms).

Mr. Brenner of Action Karate provided an assembly on “respect.” During the assembly, students were called up on stage to help demonstrate. The homeroom teachers chose volunteers ahead of time, being sure to include our students with disabilities. “The Power of One Assembly,” which occurred at the end of February, had an anti-bullying theme. Students learned about the role of the target, bully, and bystander.

We are continuing to sustain the number of students with disabilities that participate in clubs and those who are Bus Safety monitors.

***Our Positive Results:***

We learned from the ISCI survey that our students have benefitted from activities that raised their awareness about disabilities and plan to continue these activities. The literature that focused on peers with disabilities provided a positive foundation for our school as we moved to increase inclusion in electives, clubs, the cafeteria, and physical education classes. The disability awareness literature has supported the “real-life” development of positive relationships between general education and special education students in our school. Moreover, during the 2011-2012 school year, one third of our HIB reports had classified students as targets. We have

not had students with disabilities that have been targets of bullying according to HIB investigations and reports during 2012-2013 and 2013-14.

We continue to award students who exemplify good character by giving them “Good Character Tickets.” The students who receive these tickets enter a drawing to have lunch with the Principal. As the program grows, the students should have a chance to win other worthy prizes. We are planning to implement “student of the month.” We are presently working on a nomination form. Classified students have had individual, partner, and group parts in the winter and spring concerts (spoken, singing, instrumental, chimes, percussion, and dancing). We have tied in the points earned through behavior modification charts to being a hallway safety monitor. Each morning the ERS News is broadcast throughout the school. Students with disabilities have been newscasters and videographers on a regular basis. Since they have participated in the above-mentioned activities, many of these students have begun to socialize with their peers during lunch, on the playground, and after school.

All of the students look up at the LCD Screen each morning and afternoon as they enter and exit the building. They love to see themselves and they read the calendar of school activities each day, including the activities related to our character and ISCI initiatives.

In the Fall, the Health teacher taught lessons in the classrooms on, “Conflict, Compromise, and Mediation,” “Types of Bullying and What to do if Bullied,” and “The Role of the Bystander.” The guidance counselor taught lessons on “Prosocial Behavior,” “Forms of Bullying,” “Reasons for Bullying,” “Reporting Process” and “Bullying Law.”

During the “Week of Respect,” October 7th through October 14th, 2013, classes held many lessons and activities to encourage respect of self, each other, and family. Students in 4th and 5th Grade focused on the character trait of “respect,” while reading classroom novels and independent selections. The 3rd graders bound together as a grade level and made a “Chain of Respect.” Each classroom had students complete a link, stating what “respect” meant to him/her and how he/she can show it. Each class’ link joined together to form a long chain displayed in the hall way. In class students also viewed selections on *Brain Pop* and *YouTube* with “respect” and “anti-bullying” themes. They learned not to be a bystander in negative situations, but how to be an upstander. The 4th grade students wrote poetry and essays on showing respect for one another.

***District-wide ISCI Activities:***

To demonstrate that we are all a part of the community, Cinnaminson High School's basketball and lacrosse teams read to our students during "Read Across America" week.

To support our students in making school transitions, the Cinnamentors from Cinnaminson Middle School met, as they do each year, with our 5th graders from general and special education to discuss the younger students' concerns about middle school. In June, our 2nd Grade general and special education students from our elementary school will participate in the annual event of spending a morning in 3rd Grade classes to help them feel comfortable and ready for their September entrance into our intermediate school. Our chorus, the Music Makers, band, and strings will perform for the future 3rd graders to make them feel at home.

**Collingswood Public Schools**  
**Thomas Sharp Elementary School**

***Narrative from Our NJ School Performance Report:***

The Thomas Sharp School staff is committed to providing students with a high quality education. All of the staff take this responsibility very seriously and value the trust that the parents have placed in them. We value our parents as important stakeholders in the Sharp School learning community. Through the establishment of a partnership with our families we are able to engender and maintain 2-way communication and involvement.

The students are a part of a diverse community of learners who experience a plethora of educational activities and exposures daily. All teachers meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind legislation and are recognized as highly qualified teachers.

New district and established initiatives continue to show the district's dedication to the students. This year, that includes our new "Early Morning IXL" and "After-School Read 180" clubs which have been extremely successful. Those new clubs along with our established "Academic Enrichment" club provide students with additional support for literacy and math skills across the curriculum.

Our Mission Statement emphasizes that individuals should be provided with opportunities and experiences that will instill skills and confidence and engender a desire for life-long learning. Instructional techniques are employed that allow for individual differences in learning style. Instructional practices such as Differentiated Instruction, Cooperative Learning, Active Engagement, and the Multiple Intelligence Approach to Instruction are a daily part of the learning process. The staff continuously and actively seeks ways to tap in to the strengths of every student.

A Technology Plan that ensures that all students will have access to technological tools guides the district. Every classroom has multiple desktop or laptop computers along with a fully functioning independent computer lab. Each 4th and 5th Grade student has a district-owned wireless laptop. Every classroom teacher has a projector and document camera, while our Pre-K, Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd Grades have electronic whiteboards in each of their classrooms. The implementation of a computer-based Rosetta Stone World Language program has greatly improved the children's world language skills, which can be accessed from home. Cross-curricular activities integrate instructional technology and media across grade levels.

In addition to challenging academic programs, the students participate in activities that focus on their emotional learning. On a monthly basis, students explore character education themes that are designed to raise their awareness and instill essential life skills. Through their

participation in these activities, the students are provided with practical strategies for coping in social and emotional situations.

The Thomas Sharp School climate is characterized as being safe, welcoming, and nurturing. An atmosphere of mutual respect exists between the home and the school. The Sharp School PTA is extremely active and involved and significantly contributes to the life of both the school and the community.

***Additional Information from Our ISCI School Leadership Team:***

Thomas Sharp Elementary School has 146 students and 35 staff members.

***Overview of Our ISCI Goals:***

Our ISCI School Climate Survey indicated that our students would benefit from programs that focused on disability awareness and character education. This year our school focused on those 2 issues.

***Description of Our Showcase Activities:***

- Our students had an anti-bullying assembly where students were encouraged to work together and to avoid spreading or listening to rumors, teasing, or bully others. The assembly was followed by multiple discussions in each class about the topics highlighted in the assembly.
- An outside speaker visited each class and talked about differences that exist in people and how to feel safe all of the time.
- A Family Fun Night was created to bring the whole school together.
- A school-wide Team-Building Day is planned for all of the students to work together and solve obstacles that may get in their way.

***Our Positive Results:***

We learned from the ISCI survey that our students have benefitted from activities that raised their awareness about disabilities and plan to continue these activities. Our students are discussing the differences that people have and are starting to understand that differences are not something that they should be afraid of, but something they can learn more about. Our students are also showing more empathy and understanding in regard to persons with disabilities.

***District-wide ISCI activities:***

Both last year and this year, students from Collingswood Middle School, our ISCI partner from Cohort 1, came over to Thomas Sharp School weekly for two months to read disability awareness stories to the students. It has been nice to see that our original partner school is still involved in the project after their cohort ended. It is our goal to continue this partnership.

**Fair Lawn Public Schools**  
**Thomas Jefferson Middle School**

***Narrative from Our NJ School Performance Report:***

Thomas Jefferson Middle School is a community that inspires excellence amongst its students. The faculty challenges all students to be life-long learners by empowering them with the knowledge, skills and character in order to help them shape their futures, realize their dreams, and contribute positively to the world. Serving approximately 636 students, in Grades 6 through 8, a dedicated staff works to provide programs of instruction that engage students in a stimulating comprehensive program. Activities such as Instrumental/Choral Music Lessons, Math League, Drama Club, Debate Club and Student Council are just a few that our students really enjoy. Thomas Jefferson Middle School is a busy active learning environment where students with the support of teachers, guidance, and child study team professionals develop academically, creatively, and socially.

Another important component of our program is parent involvement. A dedicated staff in conjunction with parents and community members share in a partnership that believes that quality education is a priority. Interaction among students, staff, and parents provide an atmosphere here at Thomas Jefferson that encourages students to grow in self-discipline and responsibility. Parents and community members demonstrate their support through generous fundraising and continual attendance at Back to School Night, Carnival, Career Day, musical concerts, drama production, American Education Week, and co-curricular events. The PTO meets regularly, publishes an informative website, and assists teachers and administration with a variety of school programs. Our parent group is a strong active group contributing positively to the overall school climate.

At Thomas Jefferson the 6 Pillars of Character, respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, caring, and citizenship, are the cornerstones of our total school program. It is expected that students will have mutual respect for one another and become responsible citizens. Exemplary behavior is recognized on the student's report card as outstanding conduct recognition.

Annual school goals are developed with input from teachers, parents, and the administration reflecting the needs of students as reflected from state standardized testing. Academic excellence is recognized by placement on the Principal's List or Honor Roll.

As R.L. Stevenson said, "To be what we are, and to become what we are capable of becoming, is the only end of life." It is to this end that Thomas Jefferson Middle School prides itself in a long tradition of excellence. We are proud of our school, our academic programs, our outstanding faculty and students. It is our school spirit, the learning climate, and level of parent and community support that makes us a true learning community joined together to provide each student with an excellent education.

***Additional Information from Our ISCI School Leadership Team:***

Thomas Jefferson Middle School is a community that inspires excellence amongst its students. The faculty challenges all students to be life-long learners by empowering them with the knowledge, skills, and character to shape their futures, realize their dreams, and contribute positively to the world. Serving approximately 637 students in Grades 6 through 8, a dedicated staff works to provide programs of instruction that engage students in a variety of stimulating academic programs.

***Overview of Our ISCI Goals:***

- To create an inclusive climate, we want to continue to help our students understand what it means to be disabled through literature that fosters an understanding, while raising their level of awareness. The disability libraries continue to be important as we focus on literature that exposes students to peers with disabilities. These novels have opened up student dialogue focused on disability awareness as they teach tolerance and acceptance between general and special education students within our community.
- The “I’ll Be There For You Video” showed students that they could play together, draw together, eat together, and sing together for they were different, yet exactly the same in what they enjoyed accomplishing. It was wonderful to listen to the laughter, conversation, and joy as they came together as one inclusive community.
- The Pen Pal program has fostered friendships between students with disabilities in the Bridges program at Memorial and TJ students who are English language learners. What they discovered is how much they have in common as they have shared their home and school lives with each other.
- Faculty training is imperative in order to increase teacher understanding of how to instruct, modify, and creative lessons geared to students of all abilities.
- Thomas Jefferson Middle School continues to work toward inclusion within its school clubs, theater production, activities, physical education classes, and the cafeteria by providing programs open to all students in each area.

### ***Description of Our Showcase Activities:***

- Thomas Jefferson Middle School is in its 2nd year of continuing to build inclusive school libraries at each grade level that focus on what life is like for a middle school student with a disability. When the main character of the story is a peer with a disability the students are exposed to what their life is like, raising their own awareness and often fostering understanding.
- This year Thomas Jefferson Middle School created a video documentary about inclusion entitled “I’ll Be There for You.” The goal of this project through the ISCI stipend was to create an educational inclusive school community. For 2 years we have been bringing in speakers to discuss disability awareness, creating classroom libraries at each grade level with books that focus on empathy and understanding, pen pal projects, and teacher workshops.

Under the direction of by John Giresi, Director of the American Musical Theater, students from special education from both the middle and high schools joined with students here at Thomas Jefferson Middle School. Besides working on the video, the physical education, art, and music departments provided fun and interactive activities that took the “dis” out of the word disabilities by showing that by working together all things are possible.

This project will culminate at Thomas Jefferson Middle School with a video screening for the students in the afternoon and a parent presentation at night. We are so proud of the way this project has helped to make us an inclusive environment.

- Thomas Jefferson Middle School is in its 2nd year of continuing its Pen Pal program between our students who are English language learners and students with disabilities from the Bridges program at Memorial Middle School.
- We have continued our faculty in-service focusing on students with disabilities and how to provide accommodations, modifications, along with behavioral strategies.
- We continue to provide recreational lunch activities that promote a climate of inclusion for all students (ping pong, games, and media center activities).

***Our Positive Results:***

- Thomas Jefferson Middle School has created a video incorporating three school communities in an effort to create social interactions between general and special education students as well as between special and general education teachers. Our video along with our inclusive school libraries, pen pal program, and workshops have brought into the open an understanding of individual differences, especially as it relates to students with disabilities. The outcome has been a climate where tolerance and an inclusive attitude towards students with disabilities now exist.

***District-wide ISCI activities:***

- The students from special education in the Bridges program at the High School and Memorial Middle School were bused to Thomas Jefferson in order to create a musical video entitled, "I'll Be There for You," and participate in physical education, art, and music activities together. This was monumental in breaking down the walls between special and general education students, while creating a connection and experience they will all never forget.
- Thomas Jefferson Middle School created inclusive school libraries in Grades 6 and 7 in order to enable students to read novels with disability themes. Books such as "Wonder" are now being used by teachers as class novels incorporating assignments. Thomas Jefferson Middle School plans to continue to increase their inclusive class libraries for next year as well.

## North Brunswick Township Schools Livingston Park Elementary School

### ***Narrative from Our NJ School Performance Report:***

Livingston Park Elementary School has proudly served the people of North Brunswick, New Jersey for over 100 years. Located on the same site since 1896, the facility has undergone numerous transformations throughout the years. The Livingston Park family currently consists of 735 students in Grades K-5.

At Livingston Park, we believe in a holistic approach to education. We know that good character is developed through teaching, example, and practice, and that creating a caring school community is a prerequisite to effective teaching and learning. Thus, we are committed to providing a nurturing educational environment in which our students live and learn how to get along. As a staff that is philosophically committed to on-going peace education, it is our goal to create a more peaceful and harmonious environment by enabling members of our school community to recognize and accept their responsibility to respect themselves and others. Our school community believes that the skills of peacemaking and conflict resolution can be learned and integrated with curriculum.

Livingston Park has been named a New Jersey School of Character, verification of the efforts we put towards fostering both intellectual and emotional growth in our students. In addition, the New Jersey Department of Education has recognized Livingston Park as the Middlesex County winner of the Best Practices Award in the category of Citizenship/Tolerance. We were further honored by the New Jersey Department of Education as a Star School, 1 of only 10 in the entire state to receive the designation as an exemplary school.

Livingston Park's Student Council gives youngsters a voice in school issues. We believe the student government experience promotes citizenship and shared responsibility for the school. These values will carry over into the child's life and develop the sense of community. Through our 5th Grade Peer Leadership Program, students are empowered to be role models for younger children. Thus, we design opportunities for children to connect with other students and staff outside their own classrooms.

Efforts to maintain the highest quality of education are ongoing. We maintain an up-to-date computer lab and provide our teachers and students with integrative technology to enhance planning and learning outcomes. We have expanded our use of technology throughout the school building by installing Smartboards in all classrooms Grades 1-5 as well as our Special Education, English Language Learning classrooms, and the Library Media Center. This has

increased the level of student participation in the classroom and is an integral part of the total educational program for Livingston Park students.

Our teachers represent a mixture of veteran and new professionals who are dedicated to creating the most positive educational experiences for all our students. They are committed to the children they serve and participate in Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) within their grade level teams. This allows for ongoing professional development geared towards the mission and goals of the school, ultimately advancing student achievement.

Our students benefit from the services of our Director of Elementary Instruction, school nurse, student counselor, and child study team. In addition, specialists in physical education, art, library media, vocal music, instrumental music, and computer technology enrich our K-5 program. Programs of academic support, speech, physical therapy, and English as a second language offer individual support as needed.

Our staff is committed to offering a challenging and rigorous education that meets the needs of students on ALL levels. Teachers are trained and supported in practicing differentiated instruction to ensure that students are taught at the appropriate level in each subject area. We constantly strive to offer a rigorous curriculum that challenges our students to think critically.

Parents and guardians are valued partners in the educational process and their participation is both welcomed and encouraged. Parents/guardians support and strengthen school programs and contribute greatly to our children's success through Livingston Park's PTO, a most active and vital group. Parents and guardians and community members volunteer their time in the classrooms. Together, we strive to make Livingston Park a center of excellence for each child's education.

***Additional Information from Our ISCI School Leadership Team:***

Livingston Park Elementary School is located in North Brunswick Township, NJ. The school has 735 students in Grades Kindergarten through 5. We have a diverse population served in 33 classrooms. All special education students in Livingston Park are in inclusion classes. The school does not have any self-contained programs or replacement classrooms.

***Overview of Our ISCI Goals:***

Our primary ISCI goals are to strengthen our school culture/climate and raise awareness about disabilities that cannot be seen. The results of our ISCI survey were encouraging. We realized that we could achieve our goals of helping strengthen student-to-student and student-to-staff relationships. We also discovered that we could improve the inclusion of students with

disabilities by providing students with a better understanding of disabilities and by building community and unity. We implemented a “One Book, One School” activity, a redesigned and repainted blacktop to encourage inclusive recess and recreation, and a disability awareness fair as primary activities to foster trust, respect, and community among all school constituents. We also continued to use read-alouds, buddy classes, small group activities, and assemblies to promote inclusiveness and acceptance.

***Description of Our Showcase Activities:***

- The all-school read of “City Green” by Dyanne DiSalvo was a great success. Each class read her book about transforming a vacant lot into a community garden through cooperation and inclusion. Buddy classes (the pairing of an older and younger class together) created paper gardens which were placed prominently throughout the building. We then had the good fortune of having DyAnne DiSalvo, the author, speak to the entire school in 2 assemblies about her inspiration for this and other books and about being an artist and illustrator. This event was extremely effective in bringing the Livingston Park community together for a common purpose. The ISCI stipend was used to purchase a book for each teacher in the building and the PTO sponsored DyAnne’s assemblies. This activity continued the work begun last year by reading developmentally appropriate story books about children with disabilities to each class.
- Another major investment in student relationships was accomplished by redesigning the blacktop area used for recess and gym. The newly painted play area was designed to increase inclusion of all students during these times. We had a ribbon cutting for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade students to celebrate the opening of the new play area. 5th Grade Peer Mentors were trained and then worked with our younger students to promote fair and inclusive play. This was well received by all students and staff.
- Anthony Starego, a star kicker for Brick Township who has autism came to LP with his parents to highlight the importance of including and befriending students with disabilities. Anthony’s father presented Anthony’s story to LP’s 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade students. Anthony spoke at each assembly and then visited the special education inclusion class in each grade level. Students were able to ask him questions and obtain his autograph. The students then wrote thank you cards which were sent to Anthony. This was a very moving experience. We highly recommend watching his story, “Kick of Hope,” in the ESPN video on YouTube: <http://espn.go.com/video/clip?id=8668180>.
- We had a disability fair for students in Grades 2-5 to help illustrate the impact of certain, less obvious disabilities. Students had the chance to experience the effect of reading, muscular, and other learning disabilities. This activity built awareness and empathy among students and helped improve acceptance and inclusion. This was a joint activity

last year that was done with Linwood Middle School, an ISCI Cohort 1 participant. It was only offered to 5<sup>th</sup> Grade students last year and was expanded to include other grade levels this year.

- Students in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Grade inclusion classes worked through the book, “The Mouse, the Monster, and Me,” in order to build assertiveness and self-efficacy in peer relationships. These classroom activities helped students understand the difference between acting passively, aggressively, and assertively. This extended other classroom activities used last year to promote self-efficacy.

***Our Positive Results:***

- Our ISCI activities help provide a more inclusive climate and connection between and among students. The buddy class activities, especially those centered on “City Green,” our book for the “One School, One Book” activity, fostered a greater sense of community and improved relationships.
- The blacktop redesign has helped reduce conflict during free and unstructured play. The use of Peer Mentors in teaching and modeling play has strengthened student relationships and inclusiveness and helped reduce conflict and bullying.
- Students working through “The Monster, the Mouse, and Me” are developing better social skills and acting more assertively. There has been a reduction in rumors and gossiping and improved relationships among classmates.
- The visit by Anthony Starego, read-aloud books on children with disabilities, and small group lessons have all helped to develop a greater sense of understanding among students and a willingness to work together for all. The school atmosphere has improved as has the inclusion in social activities for students with disabilities.

***District-wide ISCI activities:***

We repeated for a second year a joint activity on disability awareness with students from Linwood Middle School, our partner school from Cohort 1. This year we expanded the program to 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> Grade. (Last year, in its initial implementation, it was offered exclusively to 5th Graders.) With a focus on an overall message of understanding, acceptance, and inclusion, our 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> Grade students participated in a Disability Awareness Fair. Livingston Park’s 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Peer Mentors supervised the activities at the fair and were assisted by middle school students from the Linwood Awareness Buddies (LAB) program.

## Plainfield Public Schools Maxson Middle School

### *Narrative from Our NJ School Performance Report:*

Maxson Middle School is home of the Falcons where our motto is Soar to Success. The Falcons abide by 4 overarching themes: Be Respectable, Be Responsible, Be Safe, and Aim High.

Maxson Middle School campus is home to 450 students in 6th, 7th, and 8th Grades. The student population is made up of 55% Hispanic; 44% African American; and 1% Asian, White, and Multiracial. Our class sizes range between 20-25 students. The student/teacher ratio for students with exceptionalities remains within state and federal guidelines. English language learners (ELL) and special needs students are included into the general education classroom setting with appropriate teacher support. There are 50 full time classroom teachers and a host of support staff. This includes 2 school counselors and 2 social workers (School-Based Youth Services). Also there are 3 security officers and a full-time school resource officer.

This school year marked the opening of the Maxson STEM (Science-Technology-Engineering-Math) Academy. Present enrollment of our school within a school is 68 students in 6<sup>th</sup> Grade. The STEM Academy teachers will be focusing on the many concepts of STEM education and will be implementing the STEM Curriculum as designed by SanJae, which stands for “Student Achievement, Not Just Assessment, in Education” ([www.DefinedSTEM.com](http://www.DefinedSTEM.com)). Defined STEM combines a unique set of real-world themed resources to create a 21st century learning platform. Our common-core-standard-aligned performance tasks, literacy tasks, and real-world videos enable students to see the relevance of K-12 topics through real-world careers and themes. Each of their resources allow students to apply concepts in simulated real-world scenarios, increasing student performance, and preparing them for college and 21st century careers.

A typical day consists of a 7 period day. Because of the varying class times there are no bells during the school day. The classes are 60 minutes long and each student has a 55 minute class called WIN (What I Need). This is a focused intervention class in which students will work with teachers directly on areas in which they struggle. This is based on the 2013 NJASK scores, as well as other district assessments. Students who are proficient in both ELA and Mathematics will have an opportunity to work with their Science teachers on a variety of projects.

Through district support, Maxson has taken several steps to upgrade our technology resources. Over the past few months, each of Maxson’s 3 technology labs have been outfitted with 25 new Dell desktop computers and an additional 80 laptops for teachers to utilize in their classrooms were purchased as well. Almost all classrooms have Promethean Boards and additional boards were installed in the Fall of 2013. Maxson is a wireless environment and each classroom has 2-3 desktop computers as well. Computer carts that were not being used by the schools will be used to store the new laptops, saving the district several hundred dollars in technology purchase costs.

The 2013-2014 school year marks our 4th year working in collaboration with the New Jersey Positive Behavior Support in Schools (NJPBSIS) program. As part of this program the students receive “Falcon Feathers” from any member of the staff to support the good choices they make. Monthly drawings are conducted and students receive prizes that were donated by local businesses.

Maxson is home to a grant-funded program formally entitled the 21st Century Program. This year we are transitioning to the “Soar to Success Academy.” This is a free afterschool program open to all students. As a part of this academy, students will receive additional support and opportunities to complete homework, get extra academic help, and join the afterschool clubs. Maxson Middle School is an awesome school!!

***Additional Information from Our ISCI School Leadership Team:***

Maxson Middle School campus is home to 450 students in 6th, 7th and 8th Grade. The student population is made up of 55% Hispanic; 44% African American; and 1% Asian, White, and Multiracial. The 2013-14 school year marked the opening of the Maxson STEM Academy in which 68 students from 6th Grade enrolled.

***Overview of Our ISCI Goals:***

Based on our survey results, our ISCI team was able to identify teacher-to-student relationships and student-to-student relationships as areas of concern. We believe that student-to-student relationships were compromised as a result of the lack of quality relationships that were maintained between teachers and students. It was for this reason that we decided to develop an event that would give students and staff an opportunity to embrace one another in a social setting, while also breaking down existing barriers between various subgroups of students. It is our hope that, as our teachers make more of a conscious effort to initiate positive interactions and practices that foster school-wide inclusion, our students will began to mirror those same gestures and accept one another. The result will be to help our school reduce labeling, bullying, and the seclusion of students.

### ***Description of Our Showcase Activities:***

This year the Maxson ISCI team designed and implemented various activities and programs in order to cultivate a school community that embraces the inclusion of all students. In an effort to promote school-wide inclusive practices, our team also collaborated with other school committees to plan new programs as well as support existing ones. Some of the ISCI activities we have implemented include:

- Staff-Student Unity Celebration and Basketball Game
- Hispanic Heritage Month Read-in
- Black History Month Read-in
- Maxson Valentine Day Bingo Social
- Winter Fest Student Celebration
- Annual Maxson Career Fair
- Maxson Science Fair
- Disability Awareness Week
- Anti-Bullying Poetry Assembly
- Maxson Falcon Choice Award
- Spring Fest Student Celebration
- Maxson-Hubbard Reunion Field Day
- NJASKS Test Prep-Pep Rally
- Inclusion of students from special education in student government
- Inclusion of students from special education in physical education and school sports program
- Inclusion of students from special education in clubs, electives, and school cafeteria

### ***Our Positive Results:***

Of our many activities, our flagship program was our Staff-Student Unity Celebration and Basketball Game. This ISCI event provided an opportunity for faculty members and students to work together and interact in a non-instructional setting. Students and staff enjoyed live entertainment provided by cheerleading and dance performances as well as speeches and testimonials presented by members of our student body. There was also an array of activities during this event that highlighted the academic, social, and extracurricular achievements of our students and staff members; selected staff and student were also presented awards. Students from all subgroups (special education, bilingual education, and general education) played integral roles by planning, supporting, and participating in this event. Our entire school

community was in the audience as the Maxson staff and students competed against each other in a game of basketball. Not only was this activity used as a platform to promote and celebrate diversity and inclusion, but it allowed staff members and students to build new connections and relationships with each other through social interaction and friendly competition.

We continue to experience an improvement in the social interactions between general and special education students as well as between the teachers and the students from all subgroups. Before we began to emphasize the importance of inclusion through all of our programs and events, students with disabilities were isolated. They did not have a fair opportunity to participate in electives or clubs, ate alone, and had their own separate gym and elective classes; they were ignored in the hallways and some teachers were even inappropriately impatient with some students with disabilities. Since introducing various ISCI projects to the school community, all students now have an equal opportunity to interact with each other in all school-sponsored activities and functions. Our efforts have also helped to establish a shared sense of belonging and pride among our entire student body. Several teachers have commented on the changes in their own attitudes towards students with disabilities.

***District-wide ISCI activities:***

Last year Maxson Middle School partnered with our neighboring middle school and partner school from Cohort 1, Hubbard Middle School, to host the 1st Annual Maxson-Hubbard Inclusive Field Day Extravaganza. The Maxson-Hubbard Field Day was developed to support our vision of an inclusive community of students working together to enhance their interpersonal and social skills. During this event students from both schools were guided through a series of team-building events, school spirit activities, and recreational activities that encouraged collaboration and built stronger and more positive student-to-student relationships, one we hope will carry over as these students enter our town's high school together.

# Inclusive Schools Climate Initiative Contacts

## Cohort 2 ISCI Schools

District and School	Team Members	Email Address
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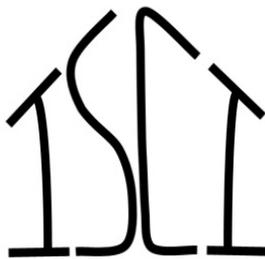
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