



# Long Branch Public Schools

*Long Branch, New Jersey*

2011-2014 Instructional Focus

## Where Children Matter Most!

At Long Branch Public Schools, we are certain about what matters most: **continuous growth and achievement for all students, without exceptions.**

The singular aim and sole commitment of our school system is to equip every Long Branch student with the competence and confidence to shape his/her own life, participate productively in our community, and act in an informed manner in a culturally diverse global society.

This **Instructional Focus** is our roadmap for making Long Branch Public Schools a **benchmark of excellence** among school districts in New Jersey. The roadmap is built on four foundations, or **Four Pillars**, namely:

- Ensuring that all students master the academic standards.
- Holding students and adults to high expectations of conduct and performance.

Michael Salvatore  
Superintendent of Schools  
September 2011



- Working collaboratively and basing decisions on fact, not opinion.
- Building strong partnerships with families and community.

Year after year, the Long Branch community has consistently demonstrated its commitment to our schools and our students. That commitment and the dedication of our staff fuel our journey toward producing students who experience **continuous academic growth**, embody **academic tenacity**, and model **socio-emotional resiliency**.

Our district is a special place **where children matter most!** With this Instructional Focus, Long Branch Public Schools continue our collective journey to turn our good intentions into strong results for all students, without exception.

*Our Mission is concise:*

We, the Long Branch School Community, strive to meet and exceed the standards set forth by the state of New Jersey.

*Our Goal is clear:*

At Long Branch Public Schools, our **Goal** is to be recognized as the **benchmark of excellence** among New Jersey school districts.

Every Long Branch student ...

- **Achieves** grade-level standards
- **Graduates** ready for college and career
- **Contributes** positively to society



Vital Signs of Student Growth and Development

We want our students to experience **continuous academic growth**. Therefore, we will monitor and aggressively analyze:

- Student performance in *core content areas*
- Successful student *transitions* from level-to-level
- Closing the “*achievement gap*” and *accelerating learning* for all students

We want our students to embody **academic tenacity**. Therefore, we will aggressively analyze and continuously motivate:

- Independent critical thinking and problem solving
- Student *attendance and active participation* in school and class

We want our students to model **socio-emotional resiliency**. Therefore, we will monitor and aggressively analyze:

- Student “*voice*” and *social responsibility*
- Student *acquisition of positive life-skills*

# PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

As practitioners, we are committed to continuous improvement of our Teaching Practices, Leadership Practices and Organizational Practices because they are the preconditions for higher levels of student achievement. Our **Four Pillars** are the building blocks of our professional practices; they frame what we must do well in every classroom, in every school, and system-wide to ensure success for all students, without exception.

## Teaching Practices

## Leadership Practices

## Organizational Practices

### Pillar #1

We will align curriculum and assessment with state standards, and deliver consistent, differentiated instruction to meet the varied learning needs of each student.

## Standards-Aligned Consistent Instruction

T1: Teachers will build lesson plans and assessments around standards-based Essential Learnings.

L1: Principal/Leadership Team will provide professional development and support on “unpacking” standards and writing clear objectives.

O1: School Staff and parents will discuss Essential Standards throughout the school year and assessment cycles.

T2: Teachers will post objectives in student-friendly language and engage students in understanding how the daily objectives are aligned to content standards.

L2: Principal/teacher-leaders will conduct classroom observations with emphasis on identifying teacher needs regarding standards-based instruction.

O2: District/School leadership will continuously evaluate and disseminate proven instructional practices for regular education, IEP, gifted, economically disadvantaged, racial-ethnic minorities, and English Language Learners.

### Pillar #2

We will motivate self-efficacy, high standards of learning and conduct, consistent effort and continuous improvement among students, teachers, staff, administrators, parents and community.

## High Expectations for All

T3: Teachers will effectively communicate the same high expectations to all students without exception - irrespective of each student's race/ethnicity, language, gender, socio-economic background, or “circumstance.”

L3: Principal/instructional leaders will regularly model, praise, measure, and validate the effective pedagogical practices of teachers and support staff who maintain high learning and behavioral expectations for all students.

O3: School Administration will provide venue and opportunity for parents and community members to engage in celebrating the learning and extracurricular achievements of students.

T4: Teachers will hold students accountable for their own learning through the use of rubrics and other meta-cognitive and reflective activities.

L4: Principal/Administrative team will communicate the expectation that effective instruction and student learning are highest priority for everyone.

O4: Administration will ensure that parents are aware of the school's vision and expectations for learning.

### Pillar #3

We will promote evidence-based dialogue among all stakeholders, and will engage teachers, staff and leadership in year-round cycles of inquiry and timely assessments to monitor and adjust professional practices.

## Data-Driven Collaboration

T5: Teachers will maintain accurate assessment results in order to analyze data and collaboratively establish student performance goals.

L5: Leadership team will utilize data in order to monitor the implementation of school-wide programs and teacher improvement plans.

O5: District leadership will provide professional development to staff regarding data analysis and professional practices to address concerns.

T6: Teachers will collaboratively analyze and individually modify classroom instruction and practices based on weekly grade level and/or subject area meetings.

L6: Principal will share the results from the focus walks (“learning walks”) at school-wide and grade-level meetings to establish next steps in instructional practice.

O6: Leadership team and coaches will hold data meetings where teachers report on, plan and analyze data to ensure continuous school grade-level or classroom improvement.

### Pillar #4

We will nurture trust among home-school-community through shared responsibility for student success, proactive communication and meaningful stakeholder “voice” and participation.

## Strong Relationships with Families and Community

T7: Teachers will show appreciation for parents' participation, and value their diverse contributions.

L7: Principal will implement an open-door policy that enables timely attention to parent/family concerns and needs.

O7: District leaders will enable parents to participate as partners when setting school goals, developing or evaluating programs and policies, or responding to performance data.

T8: Teachers will communicate student progress to families on regularly scheduled bases verbally and non-verbally.

L8: Principals/Administrative Team will provide information regarding how parents can foster learning at home, give appropriate assistance, monitor homework, and give feedback to teachers.

O8: District staff will conduct rigorous outreach activities to involve parents and community representatives as partners.

# vital signs & look-fors

## What gets measured and reinforced, gets done!

In the medical profession, vital signs define the body's most basic functions and are used to detect and monitor patient health. In a professional learning community, a series of vital signs can be used to track "organizational health" and monitor progress toward the goal.

By paying consistent attention to the Vital Signs of Student Learning and Professional Practices, we will be able to monitor and communicate progress, continuously improve practices, ensure accountability, and celebrate our successes.

Student Learning	Teaching Practices	Leadership Practices	Organizational Practices
<p><b>Cognitively engaging work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students use thinking, questioning, negotiating and problem-solving strategies.</li> <li>Students use standards-based rubrics to assess own work.</li> <li>Students engage in high-level dialogue using academic language.</li> </ul> <p><b>Closing "achievement gap"</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase percentage of under performing student subgroups scoring proficient on standardized and local assessments.</li> <li>Students have multiple options for completing a task.</li> <li>Students demonstrate competencies based on multiple measures of mastery.</li> </ul> <p><b>Motivation and satisfaction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of students who feel connected, engaged, and challenged by teachers.</li> <li>Percentage of students who are setting goals, monitoring progress and celebrating accomplishments.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Common expectations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher uses nonlinguistic representations to teach content (e.g. graphic organizers, thinking maps.)</li> <li>Teacher includes instructional tasks with high levels of rigor.</li> <li>Increase percentage of grade level/ department teams with common grading/assessment standards based on common core standards.</li> </ul> <p><b>Utilizing students' background</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher draws upon students' backgrounds and interests in the lesson.</li> <li>Teacher communicates caring for and interest in students' welfare and learning.</li> <li>Teacher creates lessons with real world applications of content standards.</li> </ul> <p><b>Data guiding instruction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher allows students to demonstrate proficiency in a variety of ways.</li> <li>Increase percentage of professional development time focused on meeting needs identified by analyzing student performance data and/or teacher practice.</li> <li>Increase percentage of grade level/ department teams using student assessment data continuously for common instructional planning.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Instructional monitoring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase number/percentage of days instructional leaders spent minimum 90 minutes daily monitoring or directly supporting classroom instruction.</li> <li>Increase percentage of teacher who participate in peer-to-peer classroom observations.</li> <li>Grade-level/department teams meet for blocks of time sufficient to develop and refine instructional plans and review student learning data.</li> <li>Increase percentage of teachers who "agree that instructional leaders set 1-1 time aside to reflect with teachers about their strengths and opportunities for improvement."</li> </ul> <p><b>PD aligned to priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional development for teachers includes self-assessment relative to the school's Instructional Focus and vital signs of student learning and professional practices.</li> <li>Increase percentage of total instructional days/hours dedicated to PD aligned to Instructional Focus and vital signs.</li> <li>Instructional leaders plan opportunities for teachers to share their strengths with other teachers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Home-school relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase percentage of teachers who complete at least one positive home contact during each assessment cycle.</li> <li>The school promotes understanding, appreciation, and use of the community's diverse and cultural, social, and intellectual resources using a variety of communication tools.</li> <li>Percentage of parents who "agree that parents understand the required academic standards and expectations for student learning."</li> </ul>	<p><b>Culture of achievement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicly acknowledge staff for meeting and/or exceeding student goals, professional practices and promoting positive school culture.</li> <li>Families know and understand focus standards for each assessment cycle at the start of the grading period.</li> <li>Staff and administration uniquely acknowledge and celebrate growth in student achievement regularly.</li> </ul> <p><b>Communications with families</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Principal and teachers actively encourage appropriate parent participation.</li> <li>Parents regularly receive "parent friendly" student progress reports.</li> <li>Each school holds at least one informal dialog with parents/families during each assessment cycle.</li> </ul> <p><b>Data management system</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District-wide benchmark assessments are administered 3 to 4 times a year.</li> <li>Data from assessments are timely and easily accessible to teachers.</li> <li>Student and school progress reports are public and shared.</li> <li>Principals and teachers have set-aside time for collaborative data inquiry.</li> </ul>