

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) or its equivalent each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's AYP requirement or its equivalent in the 2012-2013 school year. Meeting AYP or its equivalent must be certified by the state. Any AYP status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take foreign language courses.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2007 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for that period.
6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 or 2012.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district 88 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
39 Middle/Junior high schools
28 High schools
4 K-12 schools
159 Total schools in district
2. District per-pupil expenditure: 8473

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located: Suburban
4. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 11
5. Number of students as of October 1, 2012 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	58	60	118
1	64	60	124
2	82	81	163
3	61	72	133
4	72	96	168
5	72	93	165
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12	0	0	0
Total in Applying School:			871

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
12 % Asian
6 % Black or African American
2 % Hispanic or Latino
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
78 % White
1 % Two or more races
100 % Total

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2011-2012 school year: 5%

This rate is calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Step	Description	Value
(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	25
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	20
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	45
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2011	880
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.05
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	5

8. Percent of English Language Learners in the school: 3%

Total number of ELL students in the school: 24

Number of non-English languages represented: 10

Specify non-English languages:

Spanish, Korean, Mandarin, Marathi, Gujarati, Shona, Telugu, German, Russian, Afrikaans

9. Percent of students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 4%
 Total number of students who qualify: 38

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-priced school meals program, supply an accurate estimate and explain how the school calculated this estimate.

10. Percent of students receiving special education services: 6%
 Total number of students served: 57

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>2</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>10</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>18</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>19</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>2</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Mental Retardation	<u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>4</u> Developmentally Delayed

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

	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>37</u>	<u>1</u>
Resource teachers/specialists (e.g., reading specialist, media specialist, art/music, PE teachers, etc.)	<u>11</u>	<u>1</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>15</u>	<u>0</u>
Support staff (e.g., school secretaries, custodians, cafeteria aides, etc.)	<u>7</u>	<u>5</u>
Total number	<u>72</u>	<u>7</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1:

24:1

13. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	%	%	%	%	%

14. **For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools):**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2012.

Graduating class size: _____

Enrolled in a 4-year college or university _____ %

Enrolled in a community college _____ %

Enrolled in vocational training _____ %

Found employment _____ %

Military service _____ %

Other _____ %

Total _____ **0%**

15. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award:

No

Yes

If yes, what was the year of the award? 2007

PART III - SUMMARY

Beginning our eleventh year in August, 2013, Providence Spring is a public elementary (K-5) school in the Charlotte Mecklenburg School district. The school serves established neighborhoods, two large apartment complexes, and a few transfer students, the majority of whom are children of faculty members. Our current population of 890 students results in our being at campus capacity.

Our building is two-storied with five additional learning cottages. All classrooms are spacious and well-equipped with educational resources including SMART Boards for all instructional areas. Tutoring rooms provide ideal spaces for small-group instruction, supervised student work groups, and project planning sessions for students and adults alike. Common areas serving as research hubs include the Media Center, the first floor computer lab, and the auxiliary computer lab on the second floor.

The mission of Providence Spring Elementary, known affectionately as “PSE” by the community is “PSE: Developing the Scholars of Today and the Leaders of Tomorrow.” Among our core beliefs which have been shaped in part by educators Mann, Dewey and Hutchins, and by Adler, the father of the Paideia program, are:

- That the best education for the best is the best education for all
- That schooling is preparation for active lifelong learning
- That the primary cause of learning is the activity of the learner’s own mind
- That the uniqueness of each learner is our starting point as we provide opportunities and learning experiences leading to optimal growth
- That the principal and faculty of a school should themselves be engaged in learning
- That the school is the center of a larger learning community
- That character development in the nurturing of the whole child is an essential responsibility of the school
- That the three callings for which schooling should prepare all Americans are, a) to earn a decent livelihood, b) to be a good citizen of the nation and the world, and c) to make a good life for oneself

To help achieve these goals, our faculty and staff collaborate with our committed, active parent population to provide opportunities for children to pursue interests, develop leadership skills, be helpful at solving current societal problems and explore a variety of topics which might fuel future passions.

Reflecting upon Albert Einstein’s quote, “Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted,” the Providence Spring adults spend their energies providing expanding and challenging experiences for our scholars as opposed to an overemphasis on test preparation. These experiences include participation in Safety and Flag patrols, chess club and yearbook. Music lovers participate in a percussion group, the PSE choir, the chimes choir, or perform in our quarterly cafeteria concerts, while those interested in athletic pursuits often join Girls-On-The-Run, Xcel-to-Fitness, or the Jump Rope team. Literary enthusiasts flock to our Battle of the Books competition, the Writers’ Club, or our “Roving Reporters.” Environmentalists participate in our environmental club, and all students on campus are actively involved in school-wide and grade-level specific service learning projects which address real-world problems, from providing support to our adopted orphanage in Africa

to making thousands of sandwiches before school for Charlotte area homeless men and women. Academically, students participate in Science Olympiad, Quiz Bowl, Math Olympiad, and Mystery Class programs, often bringing home not only state and regional awards but also national and international recognition. Academic excellence is celebrated, and many students earn recognition as Presidential scholars. School marshals are selected in fourth grade for their character and scholarship and fulfill official school functions until their own graduation ceremony. Goal-setting and monitoring one's own progress is stressed in the upper grades while student-led parent-teacher conferences allow students to take responsibility for and communicate their successes to their parents under the watchful eye of their teacher.

Inspiring in their students a passion for learning, the school staff is committed to personal and professional growth.

- 36% of certified staff have advanced degrees (master's degree or higher)
- 18 teachers are National Board certified
- 47% of the staff have over 10 years' experience
- 21% of the staff have over 20 years' experience
- 5 faculty members are SMART Exemplary Educators
- 2 faculty members are Presidential Award winners, one in Math, one in Science
- A five-star After-School Enrichment program is available on-site for the youngsters of Providence Spring.

Our successes are the result of the collaborative and passionate efforts of our stakeholders who greatly value the school and the role it plays in the life of the community. We all feel quite certain that the talent and good character exhibited by our budding scholars will enable them to make positive contributions to society. And, though we value different perspectives on many topics, we all agree that "PSE is the place to be."

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results:

A. Providence Spring is part of a Local Education Authority within the state of North Carolina. As such we administer standardized assessments developed by the state Department of Public Instruction. The state tests' results are reported to us in the form of a developmental scale score, an ongoing scale spanning multiple grade levels, for which there are cut scores at each grade level and subject for students to score in Achievement Levels I, II, III, or IV.

At Level I students do not have sufficient mastery of the grade level's knowledge and skills to be successful at the next grade level. Students performing at Level II demonstrate inconsistent mastery of knowledge and skills that are fundamental to the subject area and are minimally sufficient to be successful at the next grade level. At Level III, students consistently demonstrate mastery of grade-level subject matter and skills and are well prepared for the next grade level. Students performing at Level IV consistently perform in a superior manner clearly beyond that required to be proficient at grade-level work.

North Carolina considers Levels III and IV to be acceptable and proficient, respectively, and commonly refers to these as "At or Above Grade Level".

B. Examining our data tables, we note that performance is remarkably consistent over the five-year period. Overall, our school's reading and math test scores show that children reach or exceed grade level proficiency at a very high rate. Every year North Carolina produces school report cards for every public school, and on this report card, our school's performance is represented as >95% (greater than 95%) in all areas and across all reported subgroups. This is the highest category of performance reported. This high performance is due to multiple factors, one of which is the high quality of our early childhood instruction. The teachers in Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Grade 2 are extraordinarily skillful at early literacy and mathematics instruction, and they truly lay the groundwork for high performance at the tested grade levels. Our children rise to third grade better prepared than might be expected, and children who enroll from another setting tend to be less well-prepared than those who have had the quality early childhood experiences we provide. Another factor is the superior support offered by families in our community. Together, we have created a culture in which expectations are high and families' view of the importance of school is strong.

Drilling down into our general pattern of very high performance, and our small number of reported subgroups, we have a risk group that is not broken out in the tables. Children new to our school form a small, but distinct minority group for whom there is an achievement gap. It takes a few years for students new to our community to acclimate and for teachers to coach them to the level of the high bar set by their classmates.

Over time, the rate at which our Special Education population achieves proficiency has been very high. This is despite the fact that we experienced heavy turnover in the position of Exceptional Education teacher. Over the five year span of data shown in these tables, we had three teachers in this position. We were very concerned for the welfare of our students with learning challenges. Between the years 2008-2010, we noted a dip in our Special Education students' proficiency in Reading and Mathematics. In both third and fourth grades, proficiency rates dropped below 90%. We knew that our students with Special Education services nevertheless spend most of their instructional time in the regular education classroom. We decided to restructure the format of our instructional delivery for these students, and determined that with an inclusive approach in fifth grade, our Special Education students would seamlessly receive support in all content areas, as well as appropriate reading instruction throughout the day. One of our fifth grade teachers already had a background in Exceptional Education along with her

regular education credentials. We asked her to head the effort with inclusive practices at that grade level. We clustered the Special Education students in her class, and provided inclusion services with the Exceptional Education teacher for the IEP-required minutes of specialized instruction. Our children were very successful in this setting; their day was better integrated with the class as a whole, and there were many advantages for the new Exceptional Education teacher in planning and teaching hand-in-hand with the experienced teacher. At the end of this fifth grade year, the Special Education children achieved 100% proficiency in both Reading and Mathematics. We attribute this to our inclusive practices assignment model, and were spurred to replicate it in lower grades.

2. Using Assessment Results:

A. As soon as our state test results come out each year, generally at the very end of May or early June, we pore over the data and analyze it closely. We can examine the students' scores in the context of our current classes, knowing the children and clearly recalling the units studied and the instructional delivery, including the specific difficulties and challenges that were of paramount importance at the time. The results are interesting to all the teachers; it is rewarding to note which students in one's current class achieved proficiency among those who were of greatest concern and whom we had worked hard to coach. We evaluate the performance of each homogeneously grouped math class, as well as each classroom teacher's reading groups. Following the group trends, we examine student scores individually. Each achievement level contains a continuum of scale scores, a single scale that spans three grade levels. Each student's growth can be tracked from one year to the next on this continuum. One of the most difficult challenges we face is to generate growth on the state test for our highest performing students. Our teachers have developed strategies and lessons to challenge their high flyers, but the enrichment and extension they provide is not measured by the state test. These students may have achieved a perfect score the previous year, and while the top possible score in the present year will certainly be a few points higher than the top possible score the year before, it is hard to be certain that a nine- or ten-year old child will once again perform perfectly in reading or math.

Finally, we study the extent to which teachers' talents and skills have been successful with certain children, and take these observations into consideration in assigning students to classrooms going forward. For example, we have found that one of the teachers on a particular grade level is able to work with the most gifted of math students; children in her care experience an enriched curriculum full of problem-solving and application of principles. In addition, that teacher's scores on the math test show that the students most difficult to grow (in test terms) tend to show growth when they have been taught with her methods. Another teacher's strength is working with students who are not well-prepared for the math concepts they need to have firmly established at that grade. That teacher consistently provides her children with the ability to tackle grade-level work proficiently, using targeted coaching and small-group instruction. After identifying the strengths and needs of our teaching corps, we share strategies and provide professional support in a differentiated way, within a grade level team and individually. This way we expand the capacity of the whole team of teachers.

Assessment results from state tests are not the whole picture, however. Over time, we have found that grade-level and classroom assessments during the school year are just as important for instruction, if not more so. We use the analogy of an autopsy versus a checkup: when you are conducting a physical examination, you want to be able to do something about the result. We have learned from the assessments used in kindergarten, first, and second grades, which are ongoing and closely related to units of study. We have developed a system of formatively assessing a unit, designing the assessment as we plan the instruction. When the grade level's content area assessment is graded by the teachers, we collaborate to identify which children are in need of additional experiences and re-teaching in order to master concepts. One teacher may express at a planning meeting that a particular concept had been difficult to get across, and another, whose students did not struggle with that concept, will share a particular strategy. This collegial approach is one of our greatest strengths and it is considered the secret of our success.

B. Annually, North Carolina publishes each school's test scores. Our state test scores generally appear in these publications as showing >95% of the population scoring at or above grade level. The wider community is well informed about our school performance on the state assessments. In June, parents receive a report of their child's performance on the state tests in numeric terms and in a graphic that shows their child's scores relative to the average score at this school and the average score in the state.

Throughout the year teachers are in regular contact with parents about classroom issues and assessments and about their children's progress. They know that open lines of communication are key to providing the best environment for student learning. A real-time, online tool is used to communicate student grades. Students in grades 3-5 conduct student-led conferences (with student, parents, and teacher) at the end of the first quarter, and keep yearlong data notebooks to communicate and track their own progress in various subjects.

3. Sharing Lessons Learned:

Providence Spring is regarded as a teaching and learning laboratory. From technology integration, to implementation of the Paideia principles to performance reporting, our faculty is happy to share the lessons we have learned in our quest to provide the best possible education for each and every student in our care.

The technology program at Providence Spring is looked to as a local, state, and national model. Because of our exemplary use of technology tools such as SMART Boards, clickers, and document cameras, we have been named one of 25 SMART Elite Showcase schools. Administrators, teachers, and parent leadership groups visit our school to see best practices in technology integration. Five teachers are recognized nationally as exemplary educators in technology integration. Two teachers were chosen to present at a conference in Calgary. Teachers from Providence Spring have presented at the state-level technology conference for the past eight years. At the district level, a number of our teachers assume leadership positions. Our technology facilitator heads the district facilitator's monthly in-service meetings. Teachers from Providence Spring presented at, and helped to organize, the district technology conference.

Socratic seminar is part of the educational program from kindergarten to fifth grade. We have found that students who regularly participate in seminar learn to look at text in more detail and accept multiple perspectives. Teachers and administrators have been asked to present annually at the National Paideia Conference and our principal has served on the National Paideia Faculty. Presenting at this conference allows faculty to share expertise on the active and rigorous teaching methods employed at our school, and also offers faculty an opportunity to learn from leaders in Paideia education from across the United States and beyond.

Teachers in our primary grades recognized that the district report card did not reflect the changed curriculum resulting from the move to the Common Core standards. Our principal, academic facilitator and our teacher of gifted children met with district leadership and pushed for standards-based reporting, resulting in the formation of a committee. Over a year of design meetings, the committee created a new report card. The three faculty members from our school were looked to as leaders of the movement and primary authors of the new reporting tool. The report card was rolled out this year and provided parents a far better picture of their child's academic progress.

Our academic accomplishments have given Providence Spring recognition as a good source of successful strategies and practices. We welcome the responsibilities and opportunities that come with the consistent high academic performance our school enjoys.

4. Engaging Families and Communities:

At Providence Spring we are fortunate to have a very active and involved parent community. While our faculty is very strong, we are stronger with the support of parents and stakeholders. We have one of the largest percentages of volunteers of any school in our district. Parents and grandparents tutor, assist with service learning projects, clubs and enrichment activities, chaperone field trips, staff our health room, media center, and much more. With the reductions in staffing over recent years, volunteers have become increasingly vital to our success. Tremendous parental involvement allows us to offer enrichment programs including Science Olympiad, Chess Club, Drama Club, Girls on the Run, Xcel 2 Fitness, Jump Rope Team, Chimes, Choir, Percussion, Environmental Club, Character Club, Yearbook Club, Battle of the Books, Quiz Bowl Team and Mystery Class Team. We believe that participation in these extracurricular activities provides students with opportunities for social and scholastic growth.

We, like many schools, have a School Leadership Team of faculty members, parents and community representatives. However, sharing an example of how the community supports us in ensuring student success seems a better way to share our school-community connection. A valuable community connection we enjoy is with a neighboring church formed in the 1700s. The grounds include a cemetery dating back to 1764. The church welcomes our students to visit the building and cemetery, allowing students to experience first-hand the history of our area. Grade levels connect the resources available at the church and cemetery with content being taught. Students have looked at the connection between life expectancy then and now, and drawn conclusions. This is a far more powerful experience than telling students that the treatment of medical conditions has improved life expectancy. Students create rubbings of headstones and write imagined diary entries. Digital cameras are used to create photo journals about the cemetery. Seeing the past through a visit to the church or its grounds is especially important to our student body. Our school is located in a very recently developed part of our city. What a treasure it is to have a building listed on the National Register of Historic Places within walking distance of our school! And how fortunate we are that the church welcomes our students to come and learn on their grounds. These wonderful experiences are just one example of the commitment between families, the community, and Providence Spring.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum:

At Providence Spring we are excited by the conversion to the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI). We believe these standards validate the educational program we have built at Providence Spring over the eleven years we have been operational. The percentage of high performing students at Providence Spring challenges us to provide a curriculum rich with problem solving, collaboration, critical thinking, attentive reading, cogent reasoning, and thoughtful engagement. The Common Core Standards, with an emphasis on college and career readiness, empower our faculty to adhere to principles of the Paideia philosophy that we have honored since our school opened in 2002.

The CCSSI supports our belief that a literate person in the 21st century must become a self-directed learner who does not simply accept information, but rather is discerning and willing to ask relevant questions. We believe, and our curriculum supports, the interconnectedness of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Our use of the Socratic seminar, from kindergartners to our faculty, promotes reciprocity through dialogue and creates a learning environment where interpretation of text requires supporting evidence and values varying points of view.

Our foundational beliefs are not limited to English language arts. In mathematics the move to CCSSI has brought more focused instruction, allowing for greater depth and more robust applications of learning. The pedagogy shifts the adoption of the CCSSI has encouraged are producing greater understanding of mathematical concepts and operations, and deeper mathematical reasoning skills. Collaborative groups work to solve real-world problems with a mathematical basis. At Providence Spring math is not the memorization of facts and algorithms, but rather a process of thinking mathematically and the understanding the strategies involved in problem solving.

Building strong content knowledge influences instruction in science and social studies. Our science program is enhanced by a strong outdoor education program which provides opportunities for students to interact with the world around them. From using GPS units to explore landforms on campus, to the study of the living organisms in our bog, science learning is not narrowed to chapters in a textbook. A 2012 grant provided professional development to our faculty on nature journaling as a means to share science understandings, resulting in accomplished scientific observers and writers across our student body. Social studies learning is enhanced by simulations allowing students to role-play important events in history as well as computer simulations where students make decision as mayor of a fictitious city. The end result is collaborative learning and students who examine real-world problems from multiple perspectives.

Technology, an area where Providence Spring has garnered national awards, is infused throughout all curricular areas. We recognize that our students are digital natives, and to that end we provide and encourage the use of the tools that connect our society. We believe that technology is an essential tool in a global society and that, as good citizens of this society, students need instruction in strengths and weaknesses of various tools, and in digital citizenship. Our faculty is committed to being lifelong technology learners, recognizing that tools change rapidly. We use technology tools in our school to provide our learners with opportunities to create, communicate, and collaborate.

Visual and performing arts are an integral part of the program at Providence Spring. Instruction is designed to develop aesthetic appreciation and to introduce the skills of creative expression. In addition to regular music and art classes, parent volunteers provide monthly art appreciation classes and an after-school drama club allows students to participate in a major theatrical production.

Our health and physical education program is designed to develop habits for healthy living. Exposure to physical activities, coupled with an understanding of the relationship between a healthy lifestyle and

individual well-being are stressed. Students also participate in a school-wide service project to improve health in America, connecting physical activity with support for the American Heart Association.

2. Reading/English:

At Providence Spring our approach to reading is best described as *balanced literacy*, chosen because it is an integrated way to meet every student's need for literacy and content area learning. Literacy development is central to learning in the content areas. In each classroom, at each grade level, reading, writing, listening and speaking form an important part of the instructional sequence.

Children enter our doors in the early childhood years with a wide range of literacy experiences. Some are already readers, some have not had any experience at all with books and sound-symbol relationships, and others are at varying points in between. To develop phonemic awareness, the emphasis is on listening to sounds and manipulating them in words. Instruction of alphabetic phonics is systematic and deliberate, and targets student needs; this builds the ability to decode and write words. In our classrooms, children are engaged in guided reading at their instructional level, in small groups called book clubs. In first grade, for example, the teacher meets with each group several times a week, listens to children reading, holding them accountable for phonemes and blending skills that have been explicitly taught.

In our middle and upper grades, students are engaged in reading novels, informational text, or primary source documents. On a typical day in fifth grade, for example, several groups are involved in differentiated reading. A group of struggling students reading the novel *Blood on the River* (Carbone) is meeting with a teacher who listens to them reading, models prosody and expression, and engages them in a discussion of vocabulary, implied meaning, and characters' attributes. A group of high-flyers is working on a simulation of the trial following the Boston Massacre, reading historical documents, and preparing arguments to support the prosecution and defense. The teacher will work with them later in the day. All students will benefit from their literacy engagement with the period of history they are studying. The classroom is unified, and instruction is targeted to stretching each individual to his or her potential.

Writing helps our students integrate content information and reinforces the phonics and spelling patterns learned in reading. Published authors and poets are mentors for our students' writing as we examine their style and techniques and model our own writing on that of the experts.

Our school implements the Paideia seminar. Students read complex text and through collaborative intellectual conversation, gain understanding of text that otherwise might have been inaccessible. Speaking and listening are actively taught through seminar, as well as through classroom opportunities to perform, present knowledge, and communicate thinking.

3. Mathematics:

Our Mathematics curriculum is governed by our state's having adopted the Common Core State Standards, which at each grade level has changed the content, pacing, and depth of study of each goal area, compared with the former North Carolina Standard Course of Study in Mathematics. The changes are important, because they are designed to better prepare students to be college- and career-ready. Interpreting these curriculum changes has caused instructional changes in favor of greater focus on developing conceptual understanding over procedural. To help with this, we have chosen to use the resources in *Investigations in Number, Data and Space* as a starting point for planning.

Our emphasis is on the constructivist approach, in which the important question for teachers is not "How can I give this information to my students?" but rather "What experiences can I provide my students that will build their understanding?" This approach blends very well with the Common Core Standards for Mathematical Practice. During their experiences with mathematical tasks, all our students collaborate, model, reason, explain, and relate mathematics to real-life situations.

One of the most important foundational understandings is number sense. Far from simply teaching children to count by rote, number is closely linked to quantity. Our youngest learners work with objects and group them by tens, for example, as they solve problems. This contributes to an understanding of place value in traditional numbering.

Algebraic thinking is developed from the outset. We teach representational meaning by engaging students in hands-on experiences. For example, first graders are working with algebraic expression when they figure out how many bears are in the second wagon, knowing how many are in the first and last wagons. Learning to deal with missing addends in varying places teaches children to solve for the unknown.

In fifth grade, by filling a container with cubes, students gain an understanding of solid volume prior to learning an algorithmic formula. Commonly, students arrive at the formula themselves through group discussion of their observations during the hands-on trials that the cubes fill a flat area and are then layered.

We assign teachers to the high flyers' math classes who are best able to differentiate for above-grade-level math students, enriching and extending the curriculum to deepen and stimulate their math understanding. Similarly, teachers with a specialty in methods of meeting the needs of the most challenged students are assigned to smaller groups of at-risk math students. In addition, it's not uncommon to see teachers giving extra support to children after the end of the school day.

4. Additional Curriculum Area:

At Providence Spring, the performing and visual arts are an essential component in the educational program. Knowing that education is not limited to areas that can be tested, it is our mission to create an environment that nurtures creativity and self-expression.

An example of an annual visual arts endeavor is *Picture This!*, a literacy and photography experience for fifth grade students. A funded grant allowed the purchase of a class set of digital cameras and the residency of a photographic artist. The program is replicable since the materials have been purchased and our faculty learned about photographic composition from our artist-in-residence. Project participants experience the intersection of art and literacy by using principles and elements of art to communicate through photography. The parallels between visual images in a photograph and symbolism in written work become vivid as we join the art of photography with language arts. Effectively conveying meaning through both pictures and the written word are life skills from which our students will long benefit. A corollary of conveying relevant information is interpreting written and visual expression created by others. This project fully addresses these connections.

Another annual event that supports our arts mission is our third grade musical, a grand performance that blends music, dance, narrative roles, and stage management. The production is a cooperative event supported by our music, physical education/health, art, technology, and classroom teachers. The evening performance is a standing-room-only event enjoyed by students and parents alike. When our graduating fifth graders are asked to recall the experiences they most cherish from their time at Providence Spring, the third grade musical is most always mentioned. The essential skills of cooperation, practice until a work is performance-worthy, and presentation before a group are developed as a result in performance participation.

Providence Spring also has a drama club open to our older students. A drama instructor teaches basic theater production, which develops social skills, speaking techniques, and stage management skills. A large-scale annual production is the culmination of the yearlong study.

Each year our school hosts *Art in the Park* at a municipal park. Students select one piece of art to display. Performances by our chorus, percussion team, and chimes group are a highlight of the event. Families spread a blanket and share a picnic dinner, peruse the art show, and enjoy the musical performances.

The events mentioned are but a sampling of how the fine arts permeate the program at Providence Spring. We strongly believe that a fine arts education is essential to a child's social and emotional development and thus provide a variety of rich experiences to meet the needs of our learners.

5. Instructional Methods:

At Providence Spring our largest subgroup is our gifted students. Forty-three percent of our 2nd through 5th graders are certified academically gifted. Meeting the needs of these high-ability learners requires teachers to deepen and enrich the curriculum, while they also address the achievement levels and learning rate of students who struggle.

An example of how the curriculum is enriched comes from our fourth grade. In conjunction with the November election, students took a survey to determine party alignment. The following proposal from the teacher was presented: "All students will now receive the class average for test grades." One party had to argue in favor of the proposal, the other against. This activity required strong content knowledge, communication skills that were adjusted for the purpose of writing argument, and the appreciation of varying perspectives. Students argued for or against the proposal regardless of their personal opinions, using the SMART Board to highlight supporting evidence. The activity was such a success that classes have now rewritten the state constitution for their classroom, created a class seal, and elected government officials. Every decision has required the red party and the blue party to establish consensus before completing an act. These students clearly have a much deeper understanding of how our state government operates than had they read the chapter and answered the questions in the textbook.

In our fifth grade, novel groups are formed based on reading skills. Teachers use the iPad to help meet the individual needs of learners. The app Educreations is used to record the English language arts lesson that accompanies reading of the novel. Students scan a QR code to find the lesson they are assigned. Using headphones, they access the lesson and work on the assignment while the teacher is working with another novel group. Vocabulary assessments are individualized and are given via the iPad. Teachers are able to work with small groups or individuals during the entire ELA block rather than using valuable instructional time for tasks such as administering vocabulary tests.

At Providence Spring, responsive education is an expectation. Teachers differentiate, through both process and product, to maximize the potential of all learners. Our faculty completed a book study of *Fulfilling the Promise of the Differentiated Classroom* by Carol Ann Tomlinson. This study gave teachers strategies and tools for best matching instruction to our learners' achievement needs.

6. Professional Development:

Professional development at Providence Spring is a key component of our academic success. Our faculty understands the need for continued high quality professional development that reflects a global view of educational practices. Time spent actively investigating new ideas that improve teaching and learning is considered a worthy investment.

Our training focus in recent years has included three major areas, the Common Core Standards, technology, and Paideia strategies, all clearly aligned with the high academic standards in place at Providence Spring. Thinking systematically and critically about teaching and learning permeates all professional development at our school and supports student achievement and school improvement.

Our district mandated Common Core inservice hours, but gave schools the flexibility to devise the training at the school level. For our math common core professional development, the faculty is participating in a book study on *Classroom Discussions: Using Math Talk to Help Students Learn* (Chapin, O'Connor, Anderson). Monthly book talk meetings allow for group reflection on the content covered, sharing of math talk strategies that are effective, and reflection on current and future pedagogy.

At Providence Spring, our PTA has invested heavily in the purchase of technology for our classrooms. Our faculty recognizes that *having* the technology is only a beginning. Instructional technology is not transformative on its own. However, in the hands of a capable teacher who can align the available technology with student achievement goals, technology is a highly effective tool. We have a training program called "Technology Tuesday" with a number of break-out sessions for novice to advanced users. Teachers can select which area of training to attend. To ensure that the technology reaches the students, additional renewal credit may be earned through using the skill or tool introduced at Technology Tuesday in the classroom setting.

Since our school opened in 2002, our faculty is united by our belief in the Paideia Principles and our use of the Socratic seminar as a means for classroom discourse. We believe that as seminar leaders, participation in adult seminars is fundamental. We have regular staff seminars where the seminar "text" has ranged from "The Allegory of the Cave" by Plato, to a comparison of maps by Eratosthenes, Ptolemy, and Moll to an examination of the video about motivation, "Drive" by Daniel Pink. We know that such collaborative dialogue produces wider and deeper understanding of ideas and values in the text being examined. The higher level thinking and reasoning required in a seminar setting supports our school improvement plan and strengthens student achievement.

7. School Leadership:

The one question which guides each policy decision at Providence Spring is, "What is best for the children?" School leadership is widely distributed and many people have different leadership roles. In addition to central leadership provided by the principal and assistant principal, the core instructional team (consisting of the program/technology facilitator, the academic facilitator and the talent development lead teacher) spearheads academic and curricular initiatives. With the adoption of the Common Core State Standards Initiative, the core instructional team took the lead in training teachers to become familiar with the standards and to support their instruction to provide the best possible learning for children.

Professionals are trusted and empowered to create an environment for teaching and learning focused on student achievement. Grade level chairpersons and special area team leaders work in harmony with the administrative staff to implement programs and recommend use of available resources. For example, 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade level chairs observed that student achievement increased when children were grouped strategically in math, with classes staffed differentially. Recognizing the need for more personnel to implement the groupings teachers envisioned, the principal used creative staffing to provide a part-time teacher to lower the student-teacher ratio in math classes. As a result, teachers are able to establish deeper relationships with their math students, address the needs of individual students, and improve concept development in mathematics.

It is the job of key administrators to support the work and remove the obstacles facing educators. For example, when our district mandated the use of a five-day rotation of special area classes, our principal met with district leaders and proposed an alternative that allowed for collaborative planning for each grade level for optimal student achievement and more equitable access for all children to each special area class. District administrators recognized the validity of our principal's proposal, and incorporated our model into district policy. School leaders who are willing to confront district and state decision makers to ensure that policies and procedures are in the best interest of children are essential to our school's success.

Because the needs of students guide our decision making, the end result is increased achievement and students who are well-rounded citizens of the world. Our faculty and staff have a high level of respect for each other and an appreciation of working in an organization that truly cares about teaching and learning.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 3 Test: North Carolina End of Grade Mathematics Test

Edition/Publication Year: Edition 2005-2006

Publisher: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
SCHOOL SCORES					
Level III/IV	100	99	99	99	98
Level IV	74	74	73	77	68
Number of students tested	158	159	150	146	148
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	0	3	2	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	0	2	1	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Level IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	7	8	4	3	3
2. African American Students					
Level III/IV	100	100	Masked	Masked	Masked
Level IV	70	42	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	10	12	7	5	6
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Level IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	5	5	5	4	3
4. Special Education Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	100	96
Level IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	65	48
Number of students tested	8	6	8	20	23
5. English Language Learner Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	0	0
Level IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	0	0
Number of students tested	2	5	2		
6. Asian					
Level III/IV	100	100	100	100	100
Level IV	89	75	62	82	87
Number of students tested	19	12	13	11	15
NOTES: Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested.					

13NC9

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: Test: North Carolina End of Grade Reading
3 Comprehension Test

Edition/Publication Year: Edition
3/2007-2008

Publisher: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
SCHOOL SCORES					
Level III/IV	98	98	98	100	94
Level IV	67	62	57	69	65
Number of students tested	157	158	149	146	148
Percent of total students tested	99	99	99	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	2	3	5	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	1	2	3	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Level IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	5	8	3	3	3
2. African American Students					
Level III/IV	100	100	Masked	Masked	Masked
Level IV	50	33	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	10	12	6	5	6
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Level IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	5	5	5	4	3
4. Special Education Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	100	78
Level IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	50	39
Number of students tested	8	6	8	20	23
5. English Language Learner Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	0	0
Level IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	0	0
Number of students tested	1	4	1		
6. Asian					
Level III/IV	100	100	100	100	100
Level IV	74	64	58	73	80
Number of students tested	19	12	12	11	15
NOTES: Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested. In 2008-2009, 3% of our students (5 children) were alternatively assessed in reading. This number was larger than other years; however, student needs were in accordance with our state guidelines for providing an alternate assessment. These students all had a current IEP, as demonstrated by objective evidence (IQ tests, aptitude and psychological evaluation) these students disabilities precluded them from achieving grade-level proficiency, and the nature of their disabilities required an assessment different in design.					

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: Test: North Carolina End of Grade Mathematics
4 Test

Edition/Publication Year: Edition 2005-2006

Publisher: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
SCHOOL SCORES					
Level III/IV	99	99	100	100	100
Level IV	71	83	86	82	83
Number of students tested	166	155	140	148	154
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	3	3	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	2	2	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Level III/IV	100	Masked	Masked	Masked	0
Level IV	20	Masked	Masked	Masked	0
Number of students tested	10	4	3	3	
2. African American Students					
Level III/IV	100	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Level IV	36	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	11	8	5	4	3
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Level IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	6	5	4	3	4
4. Special Education Students					
Level III/IV	100	82	100	100	Masked
Level IV	27	45	50	75	Masked
Number of students tested	11	11	12	12	8
5. English Language Learner Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	0	Masked	Masked
Level IV	Masked	Masked	0	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	5	1		1	2
6. Asian					
Level III/IV	94	100	100	100	Masked
Level IV	69	79	100	88	Masked
Number of students tested	16	14	11	16	5
NOTES: Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested.					

13NC9

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: Test: North Carolina End of Grade Reading
4 Comprehension Test

Edition/Publication Year: Edition
3/2007-2008

Publisher: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
SCHOOL SCORES					
Level III/IV	98	97	100	98	97
Level IV	69	70	67	76	70
Number of students tested	166	154	140	147	153
Percent of total students tested	100	99	100	99	98
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	4	5	2	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	3	4	1	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Level III/IV	90	Masked	Masked	Masked	0
Level IV	20	Masked	Masked	Masked	0
Number of students tested	10	4	4	3	
2. African American Students					
Level III/IV	100	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Level IV	64	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	11	8	5	4	3
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Level IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	5	4	4	3	4
4. Special Education Students					
Level III/IV	100	Masked	100	92	Masked
Level IV	36	Masked	42	50	Masked
Number of students tested	11	7	12	12	8
5. English Language Learner Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	0	0	Masked
Level IV	Masked	Masked	0	0	Masked
Number of students tested	5	1			1
6. Asian					
Level III/IV	87	93	100	100	Masked
Level IV	73	71	64	87	Masked
Number of students tested	15	14	11	15	4
<p>NOTES: Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested. In 2009-2010, 4% of our students (5 children) and in 2010-2011, 3% (4 students) were alternatively assessed in reading. This number was larger than other years; however, student needs were in accordance with our state guidelines for providing an alternate assessment. These students all had a current IEP, as demonstrated by objective evidence (IQ tests, aptitude and psychological evaluation) these students disabilities precluded them from achieving grade-level proficiency, and the nature of their disabilities required an assessment different in design.</p>					

13NC9

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 5 Test: North Carolina End of Grade Mathematics Test

Edition/Publication Year: Edition 2005-2006

Publisher: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
SCHOOL SCORES					
Level III/IV	99	100	99	100	96
Level IV	74	75	83	75	57
Number of students tested	156	146	145	147	140
Percent of total students tested	100	99	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	3	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	2	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Level IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	6	8	4	1	4
2. African American Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	100
Level IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	10
Number of students tested	9	6	6	7	10
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Level IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	4	3	3	4	6
4. Special Education Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	100	Masked	Masked	73
Level IV	Masked	45	Masked	Masked	18
Number of students tested	8	11	7	3	11
5. English Language Learner Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	0	Masked	Masked
Level IV	Masked	Masked	0	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	2	3		2	4
6. Asian					
Level III/IV	100	100	100	Masked	Masked
Level IV	71	90	100	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	14	10	14	5	3
NOTES: Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested.					

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: Test: North Carolina End of Grade Reading
5 Comprehension Test

Edition/Publication Year: Edition
3/2007-2008

Publisher: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
SCHOOL SCORES					
Level III/IV	99	100	99	99	92
Level IV	51	63	66	61	42
Number of students tested	155	145	145	147	139
Percent of total students tested	99	99	100	100	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	5	1	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	3	1	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Level IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	6	8	4	1	4
2. African American Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	90
Level IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	20
Number of students tested	9	6	6	7	10
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Level IV	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	4	3	3	4	6
4. Special Education Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	100	Masked	Masked	80
Level IV	Masked	36	Masked	Masked	10
Number of students tested	8	11	7	3	10
5. English Language Learner Students					
Level III/IV	Masked	Masked	0	Masked	Masked
Level IV	Masked	Masked	0	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	2	2		2	4
6. Asian					
Level III/IV	93	100	100	Masked	Masked
Level IV	43	80	86	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	14	10	14	5	3
<p>NOTES: Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested. In 2010-2011, 3% of our students (5 children) were alternatively assessed in reading. This is the same group of children mentioned on the third and fourth grade reading tables. This number was larger than other years; however, student needs were in accordance with our state guidelines for providing an alternate assessment. These students all had a current IEP, as demonstrated by objective evidence (IQ tests, aptitude and psychological evaluation) these students disabilities precluded them from achieving grade-level proficiency, and the nature of their disabilities required an assessment different in design.</p>					