



State of Clinton Elementary School Annual Address 2011-2012

It is with great pride that I share with you our annual State of Clinton School Address. I will follow the format of previous years using the district's LEARNS acronym to present an update of our progress at Clinton Elementary School.

L – Leadership for learning

We are continuing our Pre-K -3rd Leadership Seminars with the NJ Department of Education-Division of Early Childhood, The Association for Children of NJ, and the Foundation for Educational Administration. This month I will present a district summary and case statement to administrative teams from several NJ school districts. We will share successes and collaborate with administrators and seminar instructors in addressing challenges that arise in our schools and districts.

I am working with an in-district administrative professional learning team consisting of five elementary principals, one middle school assistant principal, and our K-8 special education supervisor. Our goal this year is to review the District Management Council's Report on Special Education Opportunities and Struggling Students Review as we focus on creating the most effective inclusion settings for our students. As a member of the NJ Coalition for Inclusive Education, I invited one of the inclusion facilitators to meet with our team to review research-based practices to assist us in educating and supporting our students with disabilities.

Our Clinton teachers continue their collaborative learning in their professional learning communities. This year our PLC's include using technology effectively to engage students in learning and as a management tool for teachers, increasing knowledge in questioning and discussion techniques, researching and assessing student learning through project-based and student generated activities, and helping struggling students learn how to learn.

We were recently nominated by the National C.A.T.C.H (Coordinated Approach to Children's Health) Coordinator to be the National C.A.T.C.H School for February. Our Clinton kids, teachers, staff, lunch monitors, and families have embraced this program and are committed to being lifelong C.A.T.C.H MVP's. Our students set the bar high. They come to school with healthy snacks and lunches, exercise daily with their teachers and look forward to play/activity time during recess and after school to stay active and healthy.

E – Evaluation and support for effective practice

Our work continues around *The Framework for Teaching* as a tool to increase growth and professional learning. This year, through formal and informal observations, we are engaging in professional conversations around student learning which will include clarity of purpose for the goals of the lessons, rigorous learning experiences, high levels of student engagement, and safe and challenging environments.

This year we have included using technology in teacher observations as a tool for teacher's to view and reflect upon their practice. Teachers can have lessons videotaped using their own recording devices. They can then reflect upon the lessons to maintain components that are effective and review any that might be improved upon.

The Framework continues to provide a cohesive structure for our recruitment and hiring process. For our new teachers, *The Framework* is an essential reference to guide their work with our students, teachers, and staff.

A – Access to college preparatory coursework for every student

Our classes this year include four kindergartens, four first grades with one inclusion class, five second grades with two inclusion classes, three third grades with one inclusion class, four fourth grades with two inclusion classes, three fifth grades with one inclusion class, ELL students in classes in every grade level, and two self-contained classes. All our classes offer every opportunity for every Clinton kid to engage in rigorous learning and social growth.

Even in elementary school, many students have aspirations and goals. Even if they are unsure of what they aspire to, we set the stage for them. Through our “adopted” local university, Rutgers, and our “Clinton Wall of Higher Learning,” we offer our students opportunities to see what higher learning offers them. They also get a glimpse of institutes of higher learning that Clinton graduates currently attend.

We have two full and one half-time academic intervention teachers who work with the classroom teachers to assess and identify students who are struggling in reading. The academic intervention teachers work individually or with small groups of students to increase their reading skills and instill the joy of reading. Our goal is to have every child reading on or above grade level by June.

We have received a New Jersey Council on the Arts, Arts Horizon, Artists-in-Education Residency Grant for the past several years. This year is no exception. Our fourth grade students will be creating original performance pieces under the tutelage of our creative resident artist Angela Kariotis. In addition to the grant, we have incredible cultural arts assemblies to enhance the learning experiences of all our students.

Our fourth and fifth grade students engage in language arts and math enrichment. Our enrichment teacher works with all fourth and fifth grade students for language arts on a weekly basis. She also meets with identified fourth and fifth grade students in math on a weekly basis. In every classroom all students have opportunities for challenging tasks – some in learning centers and others with projects and higher level learning activities.

Clinton students thrive on challenges. With the support of our PTA, our third, fourth, and fifth grade students are entered in the Word Masters Challenge. Over the course of the year our students will participate in three challenges which encourage growth in vocabulary and verbal reasoning.

Our fourth and fifth grade students will also participate in the Math League contest to challenge their problem solving skills. The elementary contest is held in April but students have access to former challenges to practice with throughout the year.

In order to engage our students in after school activities and develop their athletic, social, and academic skills we now offer our third, fourth and fifth grade students an opportunity to join our basketball league. We will also be offering third, fourth, and fifth grade students an opportunity to join our book club and/or math club. Our student government meets after school to attend to and plan the social and civic events we are involved in. The PTA sponsored All-School Musical and afterschool Enrichment Program offer hundreds of our students a means to showcase their talents.

Ms. Bodnar wrote and received a grant for \$10,000 from the United Way. The funding will be used to offer first grade struggling readers an opportunity to increase their literacy in an after-school program.

R – Rigorous and consistent standards-based curriculum

We continue our work and professional development in implementing the K-5 language arts curriculum. Each daily 90 minute block includes whole class, small group, and independent reading, word study, and writing workshop. Building-based in-service training is being provided for teachers in Grades K-5 on effective writing strategies. Grade 2 teachers are being provided training in guided reading and best practices in reading. Grade 1 teachers are being provided district wide training in Reading Workshop. Teachers conference with students to share “glows” and “grows” with their written pieces and proudly display their work around the classroom and in the hallways.

We have begun professional development and training as we begin the implementation of our recently adopted elementary math program, Math in Focus: The Singapore Approach. Training also includes reviewing research and implementing strategies to increase number sense and analyzing data to identify student math needs for Individualized Math Instruction (IMI). Beginning this year, students have increased instructional minutes and goals for Individualized Math Instruction: 30 minutes per day beyond the 60 minute daily math lesson.

As a national C.A.T.C.H school our physical education learning experiences and the health of all our Clinton kids are curriculum and C.A.T.C.H. based. We have included school-wide Friday morning minute workouts. Our classroom teachers have incorporated movement and exercise breaks into their classes as well.

Our young artists are producing works of art that reflect the global and historical learning they are engaged in. Their creativity is evident in the hallways and main office. They are also learning and creating music which fills our hallways with sounds and music from around the corner and around the world.

N – aNalyze data on student learning

The data we glean from our Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA's) provides us with objective information to identify the strengths and weaknesses of every K-2 student and our struggling 3-5 students in reading. This information enables us to plan for any academic intervention necessary.

The reading and writing benchmarks we administer also give us additional reading and writing information to inform instruction and student/teacher conference topics.

Our district math assessments provide information about our students' math abilities. Using this information, the teachers can plan for Individual Math Instruction and higher level learning experiences.

We analyze the 3-5 NJASK data to identify trends/patterns, diagnose immediate needs, and modify/adjust instruction if needed. Using the data, we can target skill areas that need to be improved.

S – Support the learning environment

Organizing the physical space (classrooms and related arts rooms) is one of the *Framework* components we evaluate. Maintaining classrooms that are safe for our students and conducive to effective teaching and engaging learning is important to our work.

We continue to grow in the use of technology to enhance learning. Our teachers have received ACHIEVE grants this year to help offset the cost and our PTA has assisted us as well. Our students readily use the iPads, iPods, laptops, and audio equipment. Our teachers don't know "how they lived" without the document cameras, projectors, and Smartboards.

The United Way grant, ACHIEVE teacher grants, our Title 1 funding, and the generosity of our PTA, supplement our budget and enable us to offer our students programs to increase their skills and build their self-esteem.

When we work together, we can achieve great things. Thank you.
Principal O'Neill