California Department of Education
2013 California Distinguished Schools Program

Middle and High School Application Cover Page

56 73874 6098255
County-District-School (CDS) Code – 14 Digits

Ventura County
County Name

Oak Park Unified School District
District Name

Medea Creek Middle School
School Name (*If your school is selected for honors, this school name will be engraved on the award plaque.)*

1002 Doubletree Rd
Mailing Address

Oak Park, CA 91377
City and Zip Code

818-707-7923
Area Code and Phone Number Ext.

818-707-7970
Area Code and Fax Number

bbenioff@oakparkusd.org
Principal's E-mail Address

Brad Benioff
Winter Break (Alternate) Contact Name

818-335-7619
Area Code and Phone Number Ext.

I certify that I have reviewed the information contained in this application and, to the best of my knowledge, it is complete and accurate. I understand that any changes to our original data submission may affect our schools eligibility. I further certify that:

- *The Office for Civil Rights does not have any outstanding findings of civil rights statute violations by the school or district that may affect the school;*
- *There are no pending lawsuits by the Department of Justice against the district alleging that the school, or the district as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clauses; and*
- *The school or district is addressing or has addressed any identified areas of noncompliance under federal or state laws and regulations.*

Brad Benioff
Principal's Name

Principal's Signature Date

Dr. Anthony Knight
District Superintendent's Name

District Superintendent's Signature (or authorized designee) Date

Medea Creek Middle School

School Information

1. Total student enrollment: 1132

2. Which category best describes where your school is located?

   ☐ Urban x Suburban ☐ Rural

3. Does your school receive Title I funding? x Yes ☐ No

   If yes, indicate type of services: ☐ Schoolwide x Targeted Assistance

4. What is your school calendar? x Traditional ☐ Year-round ☐ Modified

5. Is your school a charter school? ☐ Yes x No

6. Number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	Full-time Staff	Part-time Staff
Administrators	3	
Classroom teachers	40	7
Counselors	2	1
Credentialed librarians		1
Nurses		1
Psychologists		1
Technology/media specialists or technicians	-	-
Paraprofessionals	5	4
Campus resource officers	-	-
Other staff *(specify)* Custodians, Supervisors	2	6
Total staff	52	21

Directions to Your School

If your school is selected as a statewide nominee, the site visit team members will need directions to your school.

Ventura County
County

Oak Park Unified School District
District

Medea Creek Middle School
School

1002 Doubletree Rd
Street Address

Oak Park, CA 91377
City and Zip Code

Brad Benioff
Principal

818-707-7923
Area Code and Phone Number Ext.

Los Angeles International Airport
Name and Location of the Nearest Airport

101 Freeway (Ventura Freeway)
Major Freeway Access

From the North:
Take 101 Freeway (Ventura East)
Exit freeway on Kanan Rd.
Turn left over freeway, drive North on Kanan Rd. approximately 2.5 miles
Turn right on Doubletree Rd
Turn right on Hollytree Rd
Turn left into the school driveway entrance.
Park along curb in front of gymnasium

From the South:
Take 101 Freeway (Ventura West)
Exit freeway on Kanan Rd.
Turn right, drive North on Kanan Rd. approximately 2.5 miles
Turn right on Doubletree Rd.
Turn right on Hollytree Rd.
Turn left into the school driveway entrance.
Park along curb in front of gymnasium

Medea Creek Middle School

School Overview

Medea Creek Middle School (MCMS) is located in the suburban community of Oak Park in Ventura County. Teachers designed the physical plant when our new school was built in 1992. Oak Park is a diverse community comprised of all socio-economic levels. The school's population is primarily from the middle to upper-middle class, with supportive and well-educated parents. The population is relatively homogeneous with 75% White, 15% Asian, 5% Hispanic, and 5% from all other minority groups. The physical campus is beautifully placed surrounded by hills and trails. The main classroom building has a sky lighted central library and small group work areas outside the classrooms. A computer lab is located inside the library. There are two newly converted computer labs and a Technology lab. There is a large Art room, and Music room that support many classes in art, chorus and bands. Our gymnasium, PE classroom, Spin Cardio room, blacktop courts and fields support a comprehensive physical fitness program.

Oak Park Unified School District contains eight schools, of which Medea Creek is the sole middle school. The Board and Superintendent are committed to site-based management with students as the primary focus. Consistent support for innovative techniques has created a record of success for our school. Oak Park is a place where the leadership truly values education. Medea Creek also boasts a very high parent volunteerism rate and has an extremely strong participation in parent groups such as the Parent Faculty Association (PFA) and the School Site Council. Parents also volunteer daily to support the school in the office and campus supervision. Parents also participate in curricular trips and school-wide events. Communication of information between home and school is supported by a comprehensive website, weekly parent emails, a monthly newsletter, video announcements and an all-call system from the principal. MCMS also holds extensive Back to School Night, Open House, GATE Presentation Night, and other parent information programs (e.g. Drug/Alcohol Awareness, Internet Safety). The parents and Oak Park community are highly supportive of education and are true partners with the schools.

Oak Park Unified School District is a designated as a "District of Choice" allowing families to apply to attend Oak Park schools from other communities. In the three years of this program, MCMS has continuously grown in size and diversity. This program has helped maintain or expand our programs while still maintaining excellence at every level.

Medea Creek Middle School is a learning community of 1132 students with 372 6th graders, 380 7th graders and 380 8th graders. The staff includes 47 teachers, 2.5 counselors, 9 instructional aides, a part-time librarian, 3 clerical support staff, 2.5 custodians, 4 part-time campus supervisors, 2 administrators and a Dean (Teacher on Assignment). In addition, we have the services of 1 part-time school psychologist, a speech and language specialist, and a part-time coordinator for our English Language Learners. There is a united focus on providing challenging and meaningful experiences for our students. Every child is viewed as an individual with unique qualities and needs that are linked to success in school and in life. These individual differences are valued and nurtured through thoughtful and progressive teaching. Our school continually adapts to keep pace with our students' diverse and changing needs through a variety of support programs including Special Education, GATE programs, academic intervention programs (READ 180, Peer Tutoring, Homework Club, Teen Issue Groups), and acceleration (7th Grade Algebra, Foreign Language classes in 8th grade).

MCMS utilizes a cored and teamed schedule for 6th grade, meaning that students have the same class grouping through core academic classes, and have fewer teacher contacts. 6th

School Overview (continued)

grade also has a separate lunch period, allowing for appropriate social transition to middle school from the elementary programs. 6th grade students take exploratory electives or may take Band, Chorus or Leadership. In 7th and 8th grade, MCMS has a 'modified block' schedule, rotating Math and Science classes every other day to allow for extended labs and hands-on assignments. Students are also placed in Humanities classes in 7th and 8th grade, a cored class combining English/Language Arts and Social Science. Students select electives in 7th and 8th grade. All students take Physical Education each day. Elective classes include three levels of Bands and a Chorus, ASB Student Leadership, Foreign Languages (Spanish, Intro to French and Chinese), Robotics, Environmental Science, Technology, and Art. MCMS teachers strive to teach through experiential and authentic strategies and to differentiate instruction for each individual student (Signature Practice 1). Additionally, All MCMS teachers have trained and implemented the "21st Century Classroom" technology program, embedding technology into teaching methodologies (Signature Practice 2).

In addition to a high academic program, MCMS has extensive programs that are responsive to the developmental needs of middle school students. There are numerous clubs available for students, intramural sports, lunch activities, dances and events throughout the year. There is a comprehensive anti-bullying and character development program; a district health and nutrition program, a variety of environmental programs, and overnight curricular trips that are open to all students. Transition programs are in place for incoming 6th grade students, including a Parent Information Night, Orientation Day, and New Student/Parent Tea during the summer. Transitions for 8th graders to the high school are also comprehensive with a Future Freshman Night, high school counselor presentations, and one-to-one meetings with the high school counselors.

When measured by traditional standards of grades, test scores, attendance and safety records, our students show tremendous success. Medea Creek has been awarded California Distinguished School four times (2009, 2005, 1999, 1994), a National Blue Ribbon School (1994), and has been designated a Distinguished School "School To Watch" three times (2012, 2009, 2006). In the classrooms, students are provided with a standards-based curriculum that is taught with rigor and relevance. The curriculum and instruction are designed and delivered with differentiation to meet the needs of all students. Our philosophy is to focus on authentic, hands-on learning opportunities and incorporating skills students will need for the 21st Century. We strive to inspire our students to become able, confident, life-long learners who will contribute positively to our society.

Medea Creek Middle School

Signature Practice 1 Summary

1. Name of Practice:
   Authentic Learning and Assessment

2. How long has this practice been in place?
   ☐ Less than 2 years ☐ 2-4 years ☐ 5-8 years x 8+ years

3. What is the Target Area? (*you may choose more than one*)

   Target Areas:
   - x Career Technical Education
   - ☐ Closing the Achievement Gap
   - x Education Supports
   - ☐ Nutrition and Physical Activity/Education
   - ☐ Parent and Community Involvement
   - x Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
   - x Use of Technology
   - ☐ Visual and Performing Arts

4. What are the target populations? *(check all that apply)*

   Race/Ethnicity Subgroups:
   - n/a American Indian or Alaskan Native
   - x Asian
   - x Black or African American
   - x Filipino
   - x Hispanic or Latino
   - n/a Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
   - x White
   - x Two or More Races

   Other Student Groups:
   - x Socioeconomically Disadvantaged
   - x English Learners

Signature Practice 1 Summary (continued)

- x Students with Disabilities
- x At-Risk Students (Academic, Social, Emotional, Behavioral, or Health)
- x English-Language Arts – Students Not Yet Proficient
- x English-Language Arts – Advanced Learners
- x Mathematics – Students Not Yet Proficient
- x Mathematics – Advanced Learners
- x Other Core Subject Areas – Students Not Yet Proficient
- x Other Core Subject Areas – Advanced Learners
- ☐ Other *(specify)*

5. What strategies are used to implement the practice? (*check all that apply*)

Strategies:

- ☐ School Climate
- x Small Learning Communities
- ☐ Parent Involvement
- x Data-Driven Decision Making
- ☐ Health Support
- ☐ Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support
- x Professional Development
- ☐ Other *(specify)*

Medea Creek Middle School

Signature Practice 1 Narrative

Authentic Learning and Assessment

I. Rationale for the Practice

Since the establishment of Medea Creek Middle School in 1978, the school and district have been dedicated to high academic achievement, responsiveness to the developmental needs of students, and providing students with skills for college and career, all in the context of meaningful and rigorous instruction. These are all tenets of the incoming Common Core Standards. MCMS has had a continuous record of high achievement; the challenge to MCMS is to keep improving. Developing instructional practices that support and benefit every student in all categories has been the constant goal for our teachers. The best results have come from authentic learning and assessment. Authentic learning bases lessons on students' own experiences to learn new concepts and ideas. Students are exposed to complex problems for which they have to analyze information, evaluate processes, communicate and collaborate with others, and create solutions. With authentic learning, students utilize diverse resources to access multidisciplinary information, beyond the teacher and textbook. Students also have choices in many of the tasks, meeting individualized learning styles and needs. Along the way, they develop creativity and perseverance. Assessment of concepts and skills is accomplished through demonstration and presentation rather than just by written test. Experiential, or action learning allows for more formative assessment to take place; allowing the teacher to interact individually or with small groups to check on their progress.

The impetus for this signature practice of the school comes from district philosophies based on educational leaders such as Joseph Renzulli (Schoolwide Enrichment Model) and Willard Daggett (Model Schools). The quote "A rising tide lifts all boats", attributed to President Kennedy, fits MCMS completely. Enrichment of the standard curriculum was identified as the basis for the restructuring plans in the 1980's and 1990's. Embedding relevant and enriching experiences for students became the touchstone for programs, lesson design, and professional development. As technology advanced, MCMS and the Oak Park District continued this core philosophy, implementing the use of technology within strategies to bring authentic learning to students (See Signature Practice #2). We strive continuously to raise the quality and expectations of our programs and our instruction, thereby raising achievement for all students.

The structure of the schedule at MCMS was designed to promote and accommodate authentic learning. In 6th Grade, core academic classes are 'cored and teamed' meaning that a group of students stay together with a block for Humanities (English and Social Science), and then a block for Math and Science. Block scheduling in 7th and 8th grades also take place, with blocks for Humanities, and a block for Science or Math on alternating days. These schedules allow for in-depth, 'hands-on' lessons, such as labs or project-based work.

MCMS has had very high results on statewide tests, but has never focused on "teaching to the test". The results of teaching and programs based on rigor and relevance have raised accomplishment far beyond the standards.

II. Description of the Practice

Implementation of the practice of authentic learning and assessment can be categorized into five categories: Daily lessons or assignments, long-term projects, school-wide field trips, extension projects, and elective courses.

1. Daily lessons and assignments: In every grade level and department, lesson strategies are utilized to be multidisciplinary and experiential, yet always based on building mastery of the standards. In Mathematics, MCMS adopted the Algebra program of College Preparatory Mathematics. In this model, the typical math lesson is reversed. Students are placed in small groups and given a problem, or set of problems that they must solve. The problems take a concept or skill already learned, and add a new, unknown concept. Students in their groups must work through a process of how to solve the problem. The problems themselves are designed to be "real world" applications. The students take what they know and apply creative problem-solving skills to come up with an answer. The groups present their processes and results to the rest of the class. It is only after this work takes place, with the students struggling through the problem, that the teacher provides the step-by-step whole group instruction. Students utilize writing, presentation, and collaboration skills to carry out the problems. In 7th grade math, students learn concepts of statistics, probability, and geometry through a Math Basketball unit. And in 6th grade students learn percentages and fractions through their Shopping unit and the House Project (students incorporate math and science lessons to create and build a house). In Science, labs are utilized extensively. In 8th grade Science, there are over 15 lab assignments, including volume displacement experiements, plane mirror lab, and measuring the diameter of the sun. In addition, projects such as the Alien Art (Astronomy) and Newton Project (Physics) allow a choice of topics, require research and incorporate multidisciplinary presentations. 7th grade labs include numerous dissections (frog, cow eye, fish, worm), observation labs (animal adaptation), and microscope labs (cell structure, microorganisms). 6th grade Science examples of authentic learning include the "Life Cycle of Rocks", where students move through several classrooms to experience geology labs, computer lessons and simulation activities to learn types of rocks and minerals and their formation. Language Arts utilizes "Reading Circles" and blogs for student collaboration in literature analysis and writing. In Social Science, students have "Exchange" projects if they have achieved high scores on the previous unit test or "SPOCK" (Student Product Options and Choice Contract") where students choose activities or projects that suit their interest, strengths, and needs.

2. Long-term projects: Numerous long-term assignments or projects utilize authentic instruction and assessment. In Humanities, students read and research the Diary of Anne Frank and then are tasked in groups to create an action plan to combat intolerance and bullying. The Tolerance Awareness Program (TAP) projects are research-based, multi-media and are presented before school administrators and community members. Several projects were adopted as a school program. In P.E., students are tasked with developing individualized fitness plans based on the fitness learning during the year, including tracking cardio development with heart rate monitors and results from skills testing through the year. In our 6th grade Math and Science classes, students are preparing for World Water Day, researching water use, scarcity, and local and global impacts. They then create action plans to conserve and recycle. Research projects and proposals are presented to other students, to school and district officials, and to community members.

3. School-Wide Field Trips: Each grade has a multi-day field trip based on the Science standards being studied for the year. In 6th grade, students attend Outdoor Education, a four-day trip to the Pali Institute in Running Springs, CA. Students learn from Naturalists in various subjects from geology, ecology, and also learn group dynamics and team-building on ropes courses and other activities. The 7th grade students attend a three-day trip to Catalina Island

where they learn marine biology, zoology, and environmental science, with snorkeling, kayaking, and marine labs. In 8th grade, students attend AstroCamp in Idyllwild, CA and engage in physics and chemistry labs, astronomy activities, and team-building activities. All of our overnight curricular trips are open to all students. On the MCMS campus,there are several themed weeks during which there are experiential activities and lessons. These annual weeks are the Abilities Awareness Week (students experience what obstacles are presented to students with disabilities), Pi Week (math themed lessons throughout all curricular areas), and Health and Nutrition Week.

4. Extension Projects: At MCMS, there are no "Honors" designated classes. To the best extent possible, students are taught in heterogeneous classes. However, any student is able to achieve an "Honors" designation in the 8th grade for all core academic subjects and P.E. To earn such a designation, students must choose additional research and projects that are designed to produce an enhanced level of mastery in the discipline. For example, students in Social Science may choose to participate in and complete a History Day project. This is a multi-disciplinary project researching and presenting a focus in History. Science students may participate in the County Science Fair, or take on a research project to earn the Honors designation. History Day and Science Fair are also projects done in the 7th grade through the core classes as well. There are opportunities beyond the school day for students to be engaged in extension projects. One such opportunity is the Idea to Impact program. Students form groups and advised by a faculty member as they research an environmental problem, develop and propose solutions, and create an education plan to teach others about the issue (e.g. creating a public service announcement or teach a lesson in the elementary schools). This program is sponsored to California State University at Channel Islands and students are connected to experts from universities and in industry to help complete their projects after which the teams present their research, projects and proposals.

5. Elective Courses: All student electives are designed to be authentic learning experiences. Several electives are technology based, such as Robotics, Tech, and Dynamic Digital Media. Students work on problem-solving assignments, learning the technical skills needed for their assignments and the need for collaboration, creativity and perseverance. Electives such as Environmental Explorers, Mass Media and Teen Entrepreneur place students in career-oriented experiences where they work to develop skills necessary to each career field. Art, Music, Drama and Leadership courses are all authentic experiences, and MCMS has truly outstanding programs in each of these areas.

III. Results of the Practice

Results of authentic learning and assessment have been dramatic at MCMS. In looking at STAR results from the past ten years, all scores have shown strong improvement. However, the impact of authentic methodology is clear. For example, in looking at Algebra scores for 8th grade, the scaled score in 2002 was 376, with 77% of the students meeting proficiency. In the last four years, with the implementation of the College Preparatory Mathematics shows the following:

Algebra I 8th Grade STAR Mean Scaled Score:

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Scaled Score	**416**	**432**	**458**	**463**	**458**

In 2012, 99% of students taking the Algebra I test scored Proficient or Advanced. The most significant change or program implementation in Math has been using the methods of

authentic learning. Dramatic improvement has also been seen in English/Language Arts during the last ten years:

Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced on the English/Language Arts CST

	2002	2012
6th Grade	**67%**	**91%**
7th Grade	**74%**	**92%**
8th Grade	**68%**	**86%**

The impact of students writing and presentation in authentic assessment is shown by the success on the CST Writing Application Scores. In 2012, the percent of students scoring a Proficient score of 6 or 8 was 99%, with 80% receiving a score of 8.

Beyond the consistent improvement of standardized scores, the impact of authentic learning experiences is shown in the numbers of students who are participating in extension programs and activities, awards received by students and by programs, and the excitement and empowerment of teachers. One of the best measures of authentic learning is the expansion of students participating in extension activities and programs. The number of students who participated in the Idea to Impact program has gone from 18 in 2010 to 72 this year. Over 70 students participated in History Day in our first year of participation. Students who earned Honors designations in 8th grade went up each of the last three years. Last year, 75 students achieved Honors in Social Science (20%), Math, Science and English each had 10% of the students achieve Honors. Students taking the California Healthy Kids Survey (2012) reported 98% Moderate to High on the School Connectedness Scale. This scale surveys caring adult relationships, high expectations and opportunities for meaningful participation at the school and in the community. Students at MCMS understand the relevance of their learning.

At MCMS, we believe that the development and implementation of authentic learning lessons has further developed the collaborative culture amongst the staff. As more authentic learning lessons are proposed in grade levels and departments, more collaboration has taken place due to the excitement the teachers have in creating powerful lessons. For example, two years ago, a teacher proposed Pi Week to try to connect students' real-world experiences to Mathematics. In staff meetings and departmental release days, teachers from all departments and grade levels began to "catch fire" with ideas that could be implemented about this theme week. Instead of seeing this as 'one more thing to teach', they become excited about lessons. Teachers overwhelmingly volunteer to chaperone the overnight field trips as they love being involved in these programs. On the California School Climate Survey for staff, our faculty responded "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" 98-100% on the questions of "This school … "is a supportive and inviting place for students to learn", "emphasizes teaching lessons in ways relevant to students", " is a supportive and inviting place for staff to work", and "promotes trust and collegiality among staff."

In all, the goal of every lesson at MCMS is to be powerful and engaging, rigorous and relevant. We know that students learn best through experiential and multi-disciplinary lessons. Providing these types of lessons is embedded in the culture of MCMS and the Oak Park Unified District.

Medea Creek Middle School

Signature Practice 2 Summary

6. Name of Practice:
   21st Century Classroom - Technology

7. How long has this practice been in place?
   ☐ Less than 2 years ☐ 2-4 years x 5-8 years ☐ 8+ years

8. What is the Target Area? (*you may choose more than one*)

   Target Areas:
   - x Career Technical Education
   - ☐ Closing the Achievement Gap
   - x Education Supports
   - ☐ Nutrition and Physical Activity/Education
   - x Parent and Community Involvement
   - x Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
   - x Use of Technology
   - x Visual and Performing Arts

9. What are the target populations? *(check all that apply)*

   Race/Ethnicity Subgroups:
   - n/a American Indian or Alaskan Native
   - x Asian
   - x Black or African American
   - x Filipino
   - x Hispanic or Latino
   - n/a Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
   - x White
   - x Two or More Races

   Other Student Groups:
   - ☐ Socioeconomically Disadvantaged
   - ☐ English Learners

Signature Practice 2 Summary (continued)

- x Students with Disabilities
- x At-Risk Students (Academic, Social, Emotional, Behavioral, or Health)
- x English-Language Arts – Students Not Yet Proficient
- x English-Language Arts – Advanced Learners
- x Mathematics – Students Not Yet Proficient
- x Mathematics – Advanced Learners
- x Other Core Subject Areas – Students Not Yet Proficient
- x Other Core Subject Areas – Advanced Learners
- ☐ Other *(specify)*

10. What strategies are used to implement the practice? (check all that apply)

Strategies:

- ☐ School Climate
- x Small Learning Communities
- ☐ Parent Involvement
- ☐ Data-Driven Decision Making
- ☐ Health Support
- ☐ Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support
- x Professional Development
- ☐ Other *(specify)*

Signature Practice 2 Narrative

The 21st Century Classroom

I. Rationale/Basis of the Practice:

Our 21st Century Classroom's (21st CC) impact on teaching and learning has transformed our campus in all areas—from how we deliver, share and assess instruction to professional growth. At MCMS we are instructionally informed by Gardner's *Multiple Intelligences* theory to design lessons that address the varied ways students learn. Fusing this with the need for teaching 21st century skills (*Bellanca, Brandt 2010*), an outstanding faculty and powerful technological tools for instruction and assessment, the 21st CC program allows a high achieving school like ours to exceed our own expectations. With Common Core, our 21st CC program has additional pertinence as we focus on authentic learning and individual and collaborative problem solving: when students must *first* think for themselves, as one teacher states, "The onus of learning is more on the student."

With the 21st CC we maximize resources to reach all students: accelerate learning for some, remediate for others, and apprentice students in relevant problem solving. Teachers have adapted the Professional Learning Model to improve and innovate along with the technology. Five years ago, with 15 of 41 teachers working in 21st CC's, we retooled our campus with implementation of technology for teachers to develop dynamic and powerful lessons; presentation tools to enhance student engagement; assessment tools providing real-time formative feedback; and more effective access and communication between colleagues, students, classroom, home and community. In 2012 all 47 of our teachers work in 21st CC. This program for improving instruction, enhancing authentic and differentiated instruction, and making curriculum more relevant to students has been central to our school's continued achievement and all of our professional development. Technology use for all teachers has anchored outstanding instruction with greater relevance and rigor AND instructional support to the myriad learners at MCMS. The infusion of technology creates an instructional program even more authentic, rigorous, individualized, inclusive and relevant than was already in place.

Since Oak Park Unified School District's passage of the C-6 technology bond 6 years ago, our site and district leadership have continued moving the vision forward: updating and expanding technology in schools to improve teaching, learning and communication. The Technology Committee, comprised of teachers, administrators, and community members, reviews practices, identifies and visits model programs at other schools, and gathers data on site needs and usage with cutting edge implementation. The "trainer of trainers" model for teachers provides continuous collaboration and support for technology. Effective teaching and learning strategies are shared with colleagues at department, Team and faculty meetings, as well as collaboratively on-line, all focused on giving students more rigorous, relevant, and individualized instruction. The program's goals target all students to raise academic achievement, but differentiation of instruction using technology has been especially effective for special needs as well as GATE students. 21st CC outcomes are to: 1.Give teachers collaboration tools to create engaging and meaningful lessons; 2.Implement more 'real world', relevant learning; 3.Facilitate differentiation to individualize instruction; 4.Create a campus culture of problem-solving, collaboration, and concept mastery; and 5.Lift student achievement.

II. Description of the Practice:

MCMS's 21st Century Classroom (21 C.C.) has galvanized an already outstanding curricular program. The 21st C.C. integrates technology and instruction for all students across all subject and ability areas with: 1. Equipment and software to provide powerful, differentiated instruction; 2. On-going training and collaboration for teachers; 3. Electronic communications

between colleagues, school and parents; 4. Access to multi-media labs for electives, individual and small group computer use; 5. Campus-wide use of 10 Computers On Wheels (COW's): 20 laptop computers and printer on a rechargeable mobile cart for use within classrooms—or anywhere else on campus; and 6. Annual evaluation, expansion and implementation of electives as a critical curricular nexus to 'real world' learning. Additionally, the 21st CC program also includes a PE Heart Lab with a *Tri-Fit* System, and a READ 180 classroom for literacy remediation. Classrooms themselves are demonstration showcases for integrated technology and models for other teachers to learn.

1.Equipment and software: All teachers receive a laptop computer, an interactive digital white board, document cameras, and remote response devices. Applications and software include *Notebook* and *iLife Suite.* Six digital and video cameras and microphones are available for teacher check-out. The District network is accessed from classrooms or homes, facilitating lesson planning and grading. Teachers use their laptops to create lessons integrating various applications. For example, in Film Studies, film clips with and without sound have students analyze the impact of sound on a scene's mood and tone. Presentation of lessons is enhanced with the use of online textbooks, Internet access, maps (i.e. *Google Earth* for geography), *PowerPoint*, music, and visuals. Digital white boards provide a large computer or camera display; notes made on them can be posted to teachers' websites for at-home reference. Teachers and students can manipulate (i.e. touching and dragging), write, highlight or change the screen. Grammar lessons are literally hands-on as students touch the screen to correct words and punctuation, thereby creating greater involvement in everyday lessons that were paper/pencil tasks. For writing instruction, a five paragraph essay template is put up and, says one teacher, "we write one as a class before they do their own. I am able to show actual student writing that is done correctly. I can elaborate on the use of vocabulary, details, punctuation, and transitions." Remote response devices allow teachers to give tests, quizzes, or surveys which provide immediate, 'real time' assessment. Quizzes are used as formative assessments, with instant pie charts that pinpoint the skills students are not mastering; teachers use the data to alter instruction mid-stream. The laptops and wireless network allow teachers to have immediate access to information: After watching *The Miracle Worker*, says a teacher, "the kids wanted to know what happened to Helen Keller. I was easily able to access Websites and other relevant information." In an elective, students learn to play chess in Chinese. The teacher records her writing demonstrations and narrations with the document camera, so "students can learn and watch while I walk around to monitor and check their progress." Document cameras are used to present primary resources and display student work as exemplars. In science, the NASA website is a live resource on the International Space Station, providing a new world to some and an extension opportunity to others. The ability to have more visual lessons and interactive methods allows more access to the curriculum for students with disabilities, such as students with auditory processing disabilities being exposed to more visual lessons. Intervention classes, such as Algebra Readiness and READ 180, are enhanced by the 21st CC technology and training. Read 180 supports students struggling with literacy and utilizes technology to create a reading lab, mixing small group-directed instruction with individual software tutorials and assessments.

2. Training and Collaboration: 100% of MCMS classrooms are 21st CC. Majority funding for the program is through a community bond (C-6) with site budget and Parent Faculty Association (PFA) funds assisting. There is centralized leadership at the district level, with a Director of Technology organizing the implementation and on-going training, and site leadership, with designated 21st CC Lead Teachers for individual help. Teacher training in technology starts with laptop computers and interactive digital white boards, plus Mac

applications, whiteboard and camera functions, curriculum integration, online resources, and collaboration of best practices. Teachers have access to lessons developed for the 21st CC via the district network, allowing wider K-12 collaboration and articulation between teachers in the district—and beyond the district on sites such as *Edmodo.com.* In the science department, one teacher organizes lessons/lecture notes and places them on the server; other colleagues then add lab examples, video clips and science links e.g., *Skyview Café*. Special Education teachers digitally receive from general education colleagues grade level content lessons so that, as a 7th grade resource teacher says, "I can differentiate for my pull- out classes. This helps those students who transition back into the general education Language Arts class."

3. Electronic communication between colleagues, school and parents : 21st CC technology gives teachers more effective ways for students to access information and to support and monitor their progress. Report cards and teacher grade books are on-line. Teachers capture video clips of their lesson: for example, a math teacher demonstrates a step-by-step process for solving an algebraic equation, saves it, and later posts it and other tutorials to the website for at-home practice. Teachers and Departments use their websites (*SchoolWires*) to post class information, handouts, *PowerPoint* notes, and video newsletters. Digital galleries (password protected) showcase student poetry and blog responses to literature and portfolios. *My Big Campus*, a digital locker, allows teachers to check group work in progress and students to work collaboratively with each other, even from home. Our PFA sends weekly email school news blasts home to all families. Monthly, a comprehensive digital Newsletter includes a message from the principal and various district and school personnel. All registration materials are also posted and completed on-line.

4. Multi-Media Computer Lab access: These *Mac* labs are designed to augment core class projects, create the opportunity for high tech elective courses, and allow for expanded co-curricular activities (e.g., Clubs.). There are two labs for elective courses. One has themed, project-based computer stations where students develop critical thinking, problem solving, and collaborative skills while learning the use of lasers, robotics, digital animation, and pneumatics; the second elective lab houses courses such as Dynamic Digital Media (photography and videography) and Teen Entrepreneur (students create and digitally launch a business). The third lab is available to all teachers to use for research or assessment. All students are given assessments in the lab on the Scholastic Reading Index (SRI), giving them a lexile score used to benchmark their reading levels. An electronic newspaper, "Panther Press", and daily video announcements is produced by our Mass Media class. Our Yearbook is constructed in our Mac lab. The READ 180 classroom utilizes technology to create a reading lab, mixing small group-directed instruction with individual software tutorials and assessments.

5. Campus-wide use of 10 Computers On Wheels (COWs): 20 laptop computers and printer on a rechargeable mobile cart for use within classrooms and beyond. Teachers check out the COWs for classroom and campus use to research, write, and collaborate on wireless Internet laptops. COWS are used for everything from Webquests to movie-making and music composition to brainstorming the next ASB community service project. The COWs also create essential learning/work stations within the classroom, providing additional and individualized instruction to small groups of students who need academic support or acceleration. COWS make fluid grouping easier between grade level core classes, with one teacher focusing on a skill or assignment as students rotate through from other classes that same period: a 6th grade rock cycle unit and math units have seen great success in having students grasp and build skills quicker. As a special education teacher notes, "With COWs at student desks, I walk them through how to use specific programs, for example, *Quizlet* to make flashcards and *dictionary.com."* to study. Teacher Websites are resources that students can access from

home, and also from the COWs within class. Students can review lessons for additional guided practice or teacher-produced tutorials (*Medea Math Tube*, *Khan Academy*) and watch these at their own pace; they can access informational links and play review games.

6. Expansion and implementation of electives as a critical curricular nexus to 'real world' learning: Technology has enabled our elective program to flourish. Newer electives such as Technology Investigations, Mass Media, Dynamic Digital Media, Teen Entrepreneur, New Media Art, Digital Music, Robotics and Computer Programming have anchored 'real world' learning into our instructional program. These are highly engaging, collaboratively learned, project-based courses that require students to master marketplace skills. Whether launching a digital business, learning about micro-investing, a digital artist's craft or a computer language, students are at the center of highly relevant content as they create meaningful products reflecting their 21st century world. Technology-inspired courses must be constantly examined for relevancy and innovation. So, each year our staff survey students' interests and assess our current electives to see which courses need updating or eliminating. We continue to refine a curricular program that is both current and forward-thinking; one that demands students hone and apply skills to meet contemporary and future needs.

III. Results of the Practice

The 21 C.C. Program is successful on multiple levels, with increased student achievement one of several important results of its implementation. We see significant improvement at the top, AND notable achievement for our most struggling learners as well:

English/Language Arts STAR Mean Scaled Scores:

	2008	2012	
Grade 6	**82% combined Advanced and Proficient**	**growth to**	**91%**
Grade 7	**84% combined Advanced and Proficient**	**growth to**	**92%**
Grade 8	**73% combined Advanced and Proficient**	**growth to**	**86%**
Grade 6	**4% combined Below and Far Below Basic**	**reduced to**	**1%**
Grade 7	**4% combined Below and Far Below Basic**	**reduced to**	**3%**
Grade 8	**8% combined Below and Far Below Basic**	**reduced to**	**2%**

Teachers are more collaborative, creative, productive and energized; they consistently report less time is needed for re-teaching and there is more time for individual support. GATE students thrive on extension and multi-media projects. Monitoring and assessment of the 21st CC program is individual, collaborative, and ongoing. Students and teachers are expected to demonstrate their continued learning. Faculty meetings are monthly demonstration and review sites for new uses, techniques and approaches—from analyzing assessment data to useful websites and resources. Quarterly grade level Department meetings devoted to instructional planning are done with laptop in hand and an eye on identifying student needs and meeting those with new practices. In addition, student and teacher electronic surveys are periodically completed to assess effective practices within the 21st CC Technology is central to how we do business now, so it is front and center of every methodological and curricular discussion we have about improving teaching and learning. Parents feel more connected to our school, as effective and regular communication about every aspect of the instructional program, from registration to grades to newsletters, critical announcements, surveys and digital student work galleries are available 24/7 with a click and a password. Students are more digitally connected to MCMS and have joined more school-sponsored clubs, competitions and events at school than ever before (see Signature Practice #1). This is powerful progress, given that our enrollment has increased 23% in 5 years and 47% (up from 21% 5 years ago) of our students live outside of Oak Park. It also gives us inspiration that our trajectory for success remains on the rise!