

# The PACE Model:

**Parents, Accountability, Collaboration, Expectations**

[ El Modelo PaRCE: ]  
Padres, Responsabilidad, Colaboración, Expectaciones

## A Proposal that Will Work

Maria Mitchell Elementary School • 2005-2006

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## A. Evidence of Success

Mitchell Elementary School is not doomed. The students at Mitchell can succeed. There are schools all over the country with similar populations that thrive. Implementing new programs simply *because* they are new is not enough; Mitchell has tried that. Simply replacing a few teachers in the hopes of finding better ones is not enough; Mitchell has tried that, too. Mitchell needs fundamental change – change to the systems within which the school operates.

Research on high-poverty, high-performing schools can give us some insight into what works. It is no surprise that virtually all of the recent studies on this topic have come to similar conclusions. Schools that consistently perform well have common characteristics:

High Expectations

Collaboration

Parent Partnerships

Leadership

Accountability

In April 2002, the *Council of Chief State School Officers*, the *High Poverty Schools Initiative*, the *Charles A. Dana Center* and *IDEAs that Work* released the study, *Expecting Success: A Study of Five High Performing, High Poverty Schools*.

They identified the factors that contributed most to the schools' success: high expectations for all students, sharing leadership, encouraging collaboration, using assessment data, focusing on students, addressing barriers to learning, engaging families and redefining special education.

The U.S. Department of Education released a report in 1999 titled, *Hope for Urban Education: A Study of Nine High-Performing, High Poverty Urban Elementary Schools*.

The report outlined several common strategies employed by the flourishing schools: instruction aligned to state and district standards, focus on attainable first goals, focus on children, collaboration, instructional leaders, parent partnerships, extended instructional day and persistence.

In 2000, the Heritage Foundation released *No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools*. Lessons learned included: establishing a culture of achievement, retaining master teachers, continuous assessment, achievement as the key to discipline and parent partnerships.

These studies, among others, corroborate our message for the future of Mitchell: The question is not only what, it's *how*.

## B. Mission, Vision and Goals

### 1. The PACE Model

Writing a mission and vision statement will be paramount to the establishment of the community of learners at Mitchell. We will develop these statements together, based on our collective reflections. The process will prompt us all to consider *why we are here*, and *what we hope to become*. The mantra that emerges will dictate how we go about our business - how we spend our time, our resources and our energy. It will create an agenda for action.

While we believe that the creation of the school mission and vision statement is a collaborative process, the authors of this proposal have an unwavering dedication to the principles outlined here.

We believe strongly that the students at Mitchell can achieve at a high level. We know which factors must be in place to begin and sustain the improvement process:

A school-wide comprehensive insistence on high expectations for all kids – this concept will permeate everything we do.

Families will be central to the success of the school. The way the school operates will have to change at fundamental a level to allow for true cooperation and shared responsibility between school and home.

Kids learn more when teachers collaborate. Teachers need time and support to make that collaboration meaningful and effective.

Everyone will be held accountable for their end of the bargain. In order for the system to sustain momentum, each person's role will be critical. It's crucial to the success of the students that each person does their job well.

### 2. Goals

1. Increase student achievement

2. Increase parent involvement

3. Increase enrollment

## C. Professional Learning Community

Research on high-performing, high-poverty schools suggests that a community of committed professionals is essential to the academic success of its students. A true Professional Learning Community, or PLC, can be defined by six major characteristics:

- Shared mission, vision and values
- Collective inquiry
- Collaborative teams
- Action orientation and experimentation
- Continuous improvement
- Results orientation

These six characteristics will be woven throughout everyday practice. They will become the foundation upon which we make all decisions – from staff development to scheduling. It is important for the Mitchell staff to function as a team with a common mission – increased student achievement. Each member of the team will have to believe that each child at the school can achieve at a high level and that the teacher has the power to facilitate that achievement.

In order to realize the full implementation of a PLC, some fundamental changes will be made to the school's foundation, including: an unwavering focus on data-driven instruction, structures that allow for collaborative decision making, a distributed leadership vehicle and an intensive staff development plan.

### 1. Focus on Data-driven Instruction

All staff – custodians, teachers, food services, administrators – will be able to explain their role in the central mission of the school – increased student achievement. Time, energy and resources will be expended on causes directly related to this end. The tone of the building, set by staff, parents and students will be clear: we are serious about our work.

Staff will participate in *Data Days*, using either professional days or regular days with release time provided by substitutes. During *Data Days*, the staff will delve into relevant information and make instructional decisions based upon the knowledge gained. With the insight gleaned from the data, teachers may work on individual student intervention plans, create flexible small groups or create new benchmarks for learning.

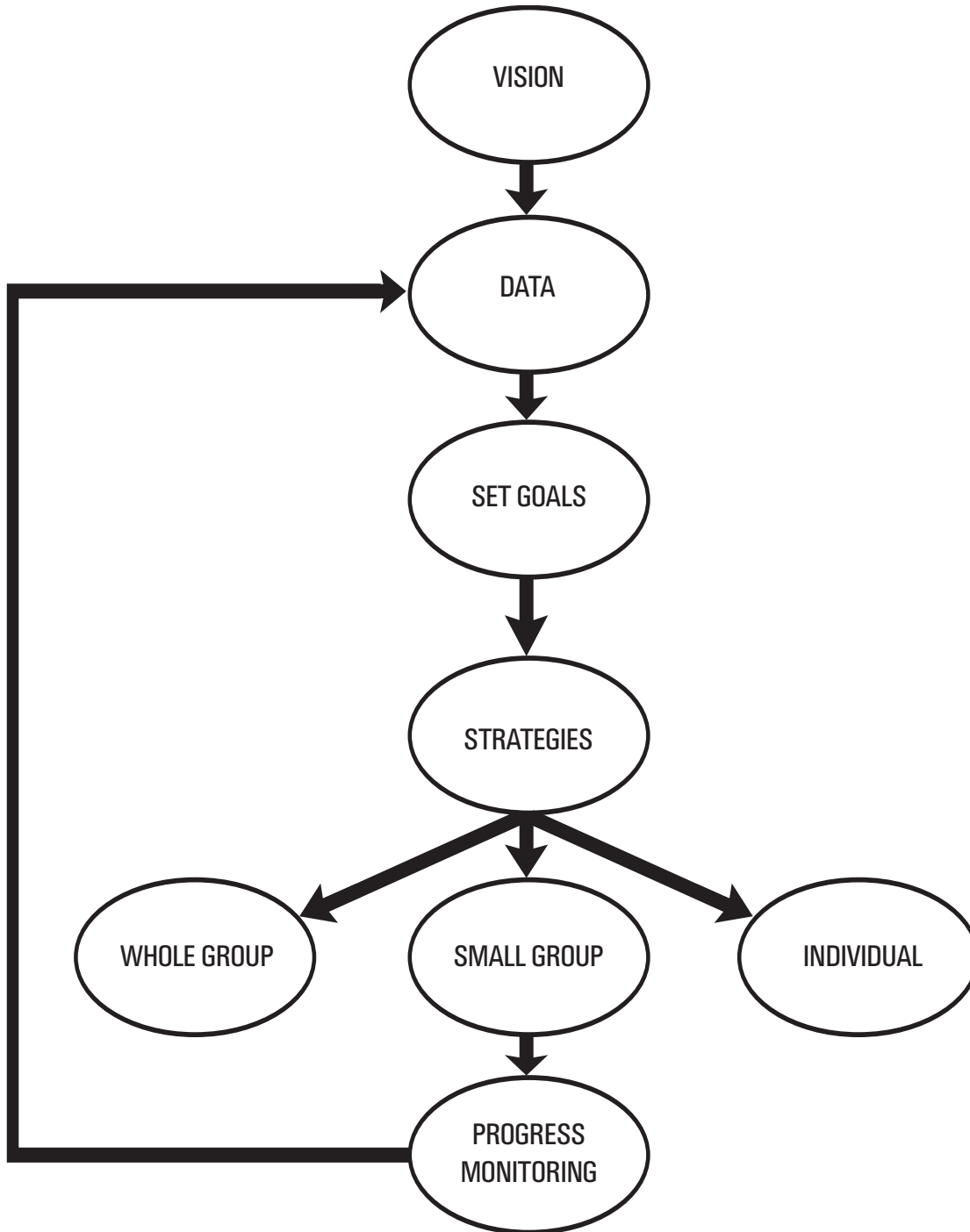
The cycle of data-driven instruction will be predictable. First, we examine the data. We then set achievement goals. We focus our collective energy on mastering the teaching strategies that best address those goals. We assess once more and the process begins again.

# The PACE Model:

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Flow Chart: Data-Driven Instruction



## 2. Collaborative Decision Making

In order to assure full implementation of the school's mission, much of the work must be done collaboratively. Teachers will plan together, observe each other and learn from one another. Parents and teachers will become partners in education, each accountable for success. Staff will make decisions on next steps for professional development within the context of the shared focus.

Together, teachers will make major decisions about the school. They will form a unified voice that tells everyone who comes in the school, "This is the way we do things here."

## 3. Distributed Leadership – The Building Leadership Team

Successful schools maintain their focus. In the 2001 study titled, "School Instructional Program Coherence: Benefits and Challenges", the Consortium on Chicago School Research notes, "Research has documented the importance of school organizational factors such as a unity of purpose, a clear focus, and shared values for student learning."

If the school community truly shares a common vision, they should have direct input into the school's course of action. A Building Leadership Team will be formed, consisting of elected representatives of the school's constituency: teachers, administrators, parents and community partners. This team will make decisions that affect the entire school. They will sift through data, assess professional development needs, choose programs and plan special events.

## 4. Staff Development

In order to provide the time necessary to delve into intense staff development, we suggest one **early-release** day each week. An extra fifteen minutes will be added to each day in order to have a seventy-five minute staff development session each week. During these sessions, staff will work together to set goals, examine data, develop intervention strategies, examine student work and receive training. Some of these discussions will be facilitated with the use of *Critical Friends Groups* protocols.

Staff development will follow a cycle that encourages data-based decision making (see Flow Chart). After the staff establishes its shared vision for the school, each team will examine the data relevant to its students. Teams will then set goals and objectives for student achievement and a plan for frequent progress monitoring. Professional development will then focus on developing strategies needed to reach objectives (see attached staff development calendar). After implementation of the strategies, progress will be monitored and the cycle will continue.

Strategy development will consist of several key components.

Examining **student work**.

Reading relevant **professional literature**.

**Collaborative decision making:** teachers, coaches and administrators will decide together on the type of training that is needed.

**Modeling:** teachers will see many examples of effective instruction.

**Lesson-study:** teachers will plan a lesson together, observe its delivery and consider its effectiveness.

**Self-assessment:** teams will create rubrics for strategies and reflect on their own progress.

## Staff Development Year-Long Calendar

PACE Model • 2005-2006

<b>Focus</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Components</b>
VISION	August	Build a shared vision with the staff
DATA	August	Data Day – where are my kids right now? What are their strengths and weaknesses?
DATA	August	Administer required assessments
GOALS	September	Choose grade-level goals and set objectives for student growth
STRATEGIES	September October	Work on strategy specified by grade level teams
STRATEGIES	October	Lesson Study # 1
PROGRESS MONITORING	November	Administer appropriate assessments
DATA	November	Data Day #2 – What does the data tell us about our progress? Planning groups based on assessment results
GOALS	November	Rethinking our goals: What do we want our kids to know now?
STRATEGIES	December	Intervention Plans – which kids are struggling? What are we already doing? What more can we do?
STRATEGIES	December January	Work on strategies specified by collaborative teams
STRATEGIES	January	Lesson Study #2
PROGRESS MONITORING	February	Administer next round of assessments
DATA	February	Data Day #3 - Have we reached our goals? Where do we need to go now?
STRATEGIES	March April	Work on strategies specified by collaborative teams
STRATEGIES	May	Lesson Study #3
PROGRESS MONITORING	June	Administer last round of assessments
DATA	June	Reflections: What does this say about my own strengths and weaknesses?

## D. Partnership with Parents

Research shows, the degree of parental involvement in a school is indicative of a school's performance. "The evidence is beyond dispute; parent involvement improves student achievement. When parents are involved, children do better in school," according to Ruth Yoon, Director of Parent Involvement Initiatives for the Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project.

The "urgency of Mitchell's situation" requires a deep reflection of the underlying issues behind the school's low performance. According to DPS statistics, out of the 83% of students who are Hispanic at Mitchell Elementary, 58% are English Language Learners. The reality of the situation warrants further attention to the challenges of communicating with families.

Mitchell Elementary will increase communication with its parents by having a bilingual parent liaison. The parent liaison's primary goal will be to create an environment that maintains an open and direct communication between the parent community and Mitchell staff. Accomplishing this component will take several forms:

### 1. Canvassing

At the onset of the school year, the parent liaison, along with the support of classroom teachers, will actively seek parental involvement by **canvassing the neighborhood**. The purpose of this event will be threefold.

- A. It will demonstrate what Mitchell Elementary School can offer their child.
- B. It will provide an opportunity to initiate the relationship between parent and school.
- C. It will serve as a recruitment strategy for prospective students.

### 2. Parent Committees

The parent liaison will play an integral role in **implementing parent committees**. These groups of parents will be committed to holding meetings on a consistent basis where concerns, issues, ideas may be presented and discussed. The aim is to create a forum that will be task oriented with visible accomplishments.

### 3. Training Sessions

We recognize the cultural differences that exist in the community. Many of the parents are not only unfamiliar with the education system in this country, but also are unaware of the cultural codes that exist in American society. By providing accessible **parent training sessions** that address topics ranging from how to set up a volunteer committee to what can be expected from a parent teacher conference, parents will become more informed with the hopes of ultimately becoming advocates for their child in their education.

### 4. Events

The parent liaison will create a climate of community by planning monthly school-wide events, starting with Back-to-School-Night in August. Thereafter, event ideas will be solicited by the school community and then evaluated based on how it aligns with the school's vision.

## E. High Expectations – The Instructional Program

### 1. Standards

The PACE program will follow the New Standards written by the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE). With a balanced approach to reading instruction in the elementary years, we will have specific expectations laid out for each grade level.

Teachers will implement the five components endorsed by *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB): phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. The standards will lay out the full range of skills, knowledge and habits that children will need to exhibit at each grade level in order to meet expectations and be proficient readers and writers when they reach third grade. Reading and writing will be benchmarked so that students not meeting the standard will receive intervention.

### 2. Literacy

The workshop format that we will implement will meet students where they are, but will also be the great equalizer, providing the opportunity for low-achieving students to make more than the traditionally anticipated “one year’s growth.” Literacy time at Mitchell will include teacher-directed large and small group lessons as well as individual time with students.

A major cornerstone of this literacy program is sustained independent reading. In one of the most extensive studies of independent reading yet conducted, Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1988) investigated a broad array of activities and their relationship to reading achievement and growth in reading. They found that the amount of time students spent in independent reading was the best predictor of reading achievement and also the best predictor of the amount of gain in reading achievement made by students between second and fifth grade.

### 3. Math

Since the adoption of the *Everyday Math* curriculum, teachers at Mitchell have seen enormous gains in students’ learning. Teacher and student response to the program has been very positive. One major obstacle, though, has plagued the program’s success: failure to set high expectations.

We will continue to implement the *Everyday Math* program, but we will insist that every student can and must master this material. The school’s math coach will help provide the needed support. Professional development in math will follow the same principles as literacy staff development: frequent modeling of effective instruction, self-assessment and collaboration focused on student work.

#### 4. Student Assessment

Following the Data-Driven Instruction model, results from assessments will be analyzed during grade level meetings, building leadership meetings and whole-staff development sessions in order to discuss next steps and adjustments to the instructional plan.

Teacher and student accountability are at the heart of the PACE plan. High expectations are useless if there is no evaluation of progress. The following model will be used to evaluate student achievement and, consequently, each teacher's instructional plan.

Classroom teachers will use the following assessments to monitor progress of individual students:

##### Pre/Post Assessments

Texas Primary Reading Inventory/Tejas LEE  
Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)/Evaluación de Lectura (EDL)  
Scored Writing Samples  
Everyday Math  
English Language Development: Language Assessment Scales (LAS)

##### Midyear Assessments

Texas Primary Reading Inventory/Tejas LEE  
Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)/Evaluación de Lectura (EDL)

##### Monthly Assessments

Reading Records using Benchmark books  
Writing Rubrics with published samples in portfolios  
Math Unit tests  
English Language Development: Avenues Unit tests

##### Daily Progress Monitoring

Teacher/Student Conferences  
Small Group Reading

## 5. Academic Intervention

We cannot allow our students to fail. One of the byproducts of ongoing assessment is the ability to determine which students are struggling before it is too late. Built into the data-collection cycle is the process of planning academic interventions. When we look critically at data, we will see which students are not making adequate progress. Teachers will create comprehensive plans to get kids back on track.

Elements of intervention plans include: a series of specific guided reading lessons, frequent conference schedule and proposed goals, parent outreach strategies and meetings with specialists within or outside of the school.

### High Expectations for ALL Students:

## 6. Early Childhood (ECE) and Kindergarten

The new Mitchell will not settle for less in the area of early childhood education. An early start to literacy and learning is essential for the success of every child. Lauren Resnick, director of the Institute for Learning writes, "The evidence is strong that young people who are not fluent readers and writers by the end of third grade may never catch up to their peers." When children come to school with few academic skills, they are often years behind their counterparts in suburban schools.

Full day ECE and full day kindergarten classes are vital to Mitchell's students' success.

## 7. Special Education and Gifted and Talented

Research shows some consistencies across effective schools when it comes to special education – it should be a path that leads to success in the general education program. Children with special needs or special abilities cannot be seen by teachers as someone else's problem.

Classroom teachers, special educators and gifted specialists at Mitchell will work together to insure success for all kids. Time spent outside the classroom will be minimized. Instead, specialists will attend collaborative planning sessions with teachers. They will, together, decide upon the best course of action for each student.

Co-teaching situations will enable successful inclusive educational environments. Flexible groupings of students and classrooms will maximize the resources available allowing specialists to collaboratively meet the exceptional needs of our students. The individual goals set for special education will be generalized to the population for any students in need of intervention so that together the students, staff, and parents can be responsible and celebrate the successes of the students and the school.

## 8. English Language Learners

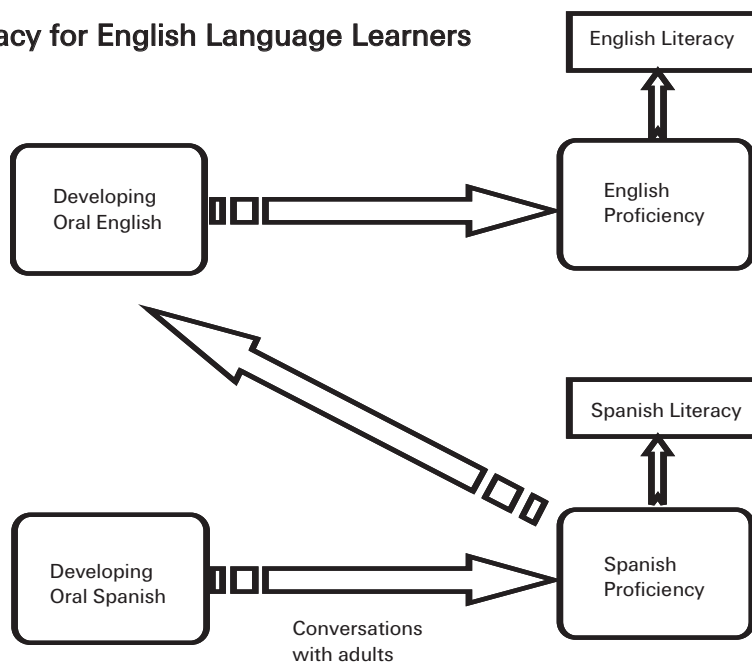
### The Path to English Acquisition

Oral language is connected closely to reading and writing. English Language Learners (ELLs) generally do not have years of early childhood and preschool experience in speaking, listening and learning English. Students will need many opportunities to talk so that the structure and sounds of English become familiar to them. Teachers will model and reinforce the English letter-sound skills of ELLs. Mitchell teachers will also provide opportunities for students to engage in experiences to develop their oral English skills. Students will practice reading in English and monitor and cross-check their mistakes with the help of the teacher initially and then on their own. Teachers will help students build core vocabulary and word knowledge in English as well as background knowledge.

Mitchell will follow the DPS/Federal mandate to instruct students in their native language until they qualify for exit from the English Language Acquisition (ELA) program. This means there will be at least one ELA-Spanish (ELA-S) teacher at each grade level from ECE through grade six. While receiving instruction in Spanish, these students will also begin the path to English acquisition.

Ann Christianson of the Denver Public Schools developed the following model which illustrates the importance of ensuring oral and literacy proficiency in the native language before attempting to teach an ELL to read and write in English.

### The Path of Literacy for English Language Learners



## **F. Accountability**

### **1. Leadership**

The role of the instructional leader, or principal, at Mitchell will be “... *head learner*, engaging in the most important enterprise of the schoolhouse—experiencing, displaying, modeling, and celebrating what it is hoped and expected that teachers and pupils will do.” (Barth, p. 46)

The instructional leader will require that all members of the Mitchell community will be involved in continual self-assessment. All Mitchell staff will develop an individual professional growth plan and will use collaboration time as well as individual meetings with the principal to discuss progress on the plan.

### **2. Rubrics and Self-Assessment**

Professional growth plans will be based on rubrics of best practices for each of the subject areas. Teachers and administrators will develop these rubrics together. The rubrics will make clear the components that must be in place in order to move along the continuum from “Developing” to “Effective” and ultimately to “Highly Effective”. Teachers will regularly assess their own progress. As outlined on our staff development calendar, during the first six weeks of the school year, teachers will be expected to implement the first level of best practices for reading, writing and skills, math and classroom community.

### **3. Walk-Throughs**

The principal and instructional coaches will conduct weekly walk-throughs. The focus will correlate with the staff development calendar. Administration and coaches will discuss progress with each teacher. Support will be provided to those teachers who are not yet implementing the strategies effectively.

Each staff member’s appraisal will be based on her professional growth plan and her ability to show progress, both student progress and professional progress. There will be no secrets. Principal and coach visits to the classrooms will be frequent with feedback given and adjustments to the teacher’s plan made as needed.

## **G. Staff Allocations**

Mitchell Elementary will continue as a Denver Public School and will follow the same budget allocation format as other schools. Special services would still be provided by the district, such as custodial, food services, nurse, social worker and psychologist. We propose that allocations be set aside for the following positions, based on the present enrollment.

### Certified Non-classroom

Principal  
Assistant Principal  
Literacy Coach  
Math Coach  
Parent Liaison  
Counselor  
Special Educator (2)  
Integrated Arts  
Wellness  
Library/Technology  
Secretary I  
Secretary II

### Certified Classroom teachers (14)

2 ECE (one funded by grant)  
3 kindergarten  
2 first grade  
2 second grade  
2 third grade  
2 fourth grade  
2 fifth grade  
2 sixth grade

### Non-certified (8)

Para-professionals:  
2 Kindergarten  
1 1st grade  
1 2<sup>nd</sup> grade  
1 3<sup>rd</sup> grade  
1 4<sup>th</sup> grade  
1 5<sup>th</sup> grade  
1 6<sup>th</sup> grade

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