



2017 Brock International
Prize in Education Nominee

James Verrilli

Nominated by April Peters-Hawkins

James Verrilli Brief Bio:

As dean of Relay Newark, Jamey Verrilli oversees all teacher-training programs in Newark. He began his educational work in 1984, as a [Jesuit Volunteer Corps](#) community organizer in the Bronx. Verrilli then joined [Link Community School](#), first as a teacher and eventually as principal.

In 1997, Verrilli co-founded [North Star Academy Charter School of Newark](#), where he was principal of the Downtown Middle School for 14 years. Verrilli has received numerous awards for this leadership, including the [National Blue Ribbon Schools' Terrel H. Bell Award](#), given each year by the U.S. Department of Education to the top ten principals in the nation. Jamey earned his B.A. in history from [Colby College](#) and his M.A.T. from [Brown University](#).

James Verrilli

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EDUCATION

Post Master's Certification, NJ School Supervisor Certificate, Kean University, Union, NJ	1996-1997
Master of the Arts in Teaching, Brown University, Providence, RI Teaching Secondary Social Studies	1989-1990
B.A., Colby College, Waterville, ME History major, <i>Cum Laude</i> , Graduated with Distinction in Major	1979-1983

AWARDS

• Uncommon Courage Award—University of Great Falls, Mo	2014
• Distinguished Educator Award- Colby College	2013
• U.S. Dept. of Education--Terrell Bell Award for Top 10 Blue Ribbon School Principals in the Nation	2010
• US DOE Blue Ribbon School of Excellence Award for North Star Academy	2010
• Humanitarian Award, NJ Conference for Diversity	2008
• Education Trust "Dispelling the Myth Award" for North Star Academy	2007
• US DOE Title 1—School of Distinction for North Star Academy	2007
• Brown University 100 th Anniversary of the Education Dpt.—Distinguished Educator Award	2000
• Willie Unsoeld Award for Leadership in Experiential Education	1999
• Delbarton Educator Award	1999

PROFESSIONAL TRAININGS AND WORKSHOPS

Verrilli, J. (2015). "Reinvesting in the Mission, #OurKidsMatter." Uncommon Schools: North Star Academy and Camden Prep Elementary teachers, East Brunswick, NJ

Verrilli, J. (2014-2015). Building Positive Culture, "Teaching by Taste-Checking for Understanding", High Expectations Questioning, Engaging Everybody, "Practice Makes Permanent," and "Meta-Moments and Ratio-Skillful Adult Facilitation," to Newark Public Schools Teachers and Leaders, Newark, NJ

Verrilli, J. (2013-14). "Managing Adults and Difficult Conversations", "Developing Teachers through Observation and Feedback", Unlocking Potential School Leaders, Boston, MA

Verrilli, J (2013). "Building a Culturally Responsive School Culture", Uncommon Charter High School, Brooklyn, NY

Verrilli, J (2013). "Practice Makes Permanent," and "Managing Adults and Difficult Conversations," New Orleans teachers and school leaders, New Schools for New Orleans, New Orleans, LA

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Jackson, J., Osagie, K. and Verrilli, J (2012). Lesson Planning, Assessing, Questioning, Building Ratio and Rigor, and Checking for Understanding. To teachers and school leaders in LEAP Schools, in Langa and Alexandra Townships, South Africa and Lebone College of the Royal Bafokeng in Phokeng, South Africa

Verrilli, J (2012). Building Instructional Culture and Strategic Planning, to Newark Public Schools ReNew Schools Principals in training. Newark, NJ

Verrilli, J (2007 - 2010). Managing and Supporting Adults, Developing Strong Social Studies Teachers and Curriculum, Annual Trainings for Uncommon Schools Instructional Fellows training to be Principals.

Verrilli, J (2007 - 2010). Increasing Student engagement and Checking for Understanding, for Teach for America Teachers in Newark, NJ, Philadelphia, PA, and Bridgeport, CT

Verrilli, J (2008 - 2009). "Building Strong School and Staff Culture", for the Emerging Leaders Fellows Program, NY Charter School Resource Center, NY, NY

Verrilli, J. (1997-2010) High Behavioral and High Academic Expectations techniques from Teach Like a Champion (Lemov, 201), infusing literacy in all subjects, classroom management, curriculum design, data-driven instruction, school culture, history and English teaching, goal setting, cultural responsiveness, working with families, questioning, ratio, rigor, observation and feedback and instructional leadership. Leading over 100 workshops for the North Star Academy network, Newark NJ

CONTRIBUTIONS TO PUBLICATIONS, DESIGN WORK

- Contributions to Teach Like a Champion, (Lemov, Doug., San Francisco, CA: Wiley, 2010) Driven by Data, (Bambrick-Santoyo, Paul. San Francisco, CA: Wiley, 2010) and Leverage Leadership, Bambrick-Santoyo, Paul. San Francisco, CA: Wiley, 2012).
- Design Work
 - Developed both on-line and in-person curriculum for Relay Graduate School of Education on checking for understanding, provided input on classroom management, cultural responsiveness, getting to know students, teachers and families, special education, ratio and rigor modules as well.
 - Assist Provost in program design work for Relay Graduate School of Education including re-structuring student growth and achievement data tracking, curriculum scope and sequences and integrating deliberate practice into in-person sessions.
 - Designed 5-8 curriculum in social studies, English and Science, for North Star Academy, Uncommon Schools
 - Designed and created standardized interim assessments in English and Social Studies for North Star Academy, Uncommon Schools
 - Developed evaluation system and rubric for North Star Academy faculty, Uncommon Schools
 - Designed and created interactive historical simulation software for teachers called "We Shall Overcome" and "A Good Day to Die" for History Active, Docu-Media, Inc.

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EXPERIENCE

Dean, Relay Graduate School of Education, Newark, NJ

July 1, 2011- present

- Help to develop and lead a new, path-breaking graduate teacher training program that has grown to develop teachers in seven US cities.
- Developing new approaches in performance-based teacher training. Our model is based around the idea of learn, practice, perform and includes blended on-line learning, integrating deliberate practice into instruction, performance assessment via video and observation, and the use of student achievement data to demonstrate the impact of their teaching. A program wherein success is based on teaching performance criteria and student achievement data.
- Launch and manage a new program for 70 teachers in 2011 and growing to over 150 teachers currently.
- Teach all core pedagogy modules for all graduate students and content instruction for social studies teachers while supporting, coaching and assessing teachers, and designing curriculum.
- Created, and launched the Relay Teaching Residency Program in Newark, NJ, New York City, Chicago, Houston, and Philadelphia, PA. This new program is designed to build a new pathway into the teaching profession that includes Relay's integrated instruction with deliberate practice, a gradual on-ramp into teaching, support from a trained resident advisor, and assessment gateways. Teach deliberate practice sessions for residents in Newark and NY.
- Train new Dean fellows to prepare to launch new Relay regions nationally in Delaware, Philadelphia, Nashville, Houston, and Memphis. Managed current Deans in New Orleans, Philadelphia, and Memphis, as well as the director of the NY Residency Program,

Co-Founder, Principal, North Star Academy Charter School of Newark

July 1997 – June 2011

- Co-founded and led one of the highest performing, urban, public charter schools in New Jersey, a U.S. Dept. of Education designated "Blue Ribbon School of Excellence."
- Closed the achievement gap by 8th grade with low income, urban students performing on par with the more affluent suburban peers. By 8th grade students perform consistently at or above 95% proficiency on state exams. By 11th grade, 96-100% high school students pass the required high school proficiency assessment and 100% of graduates attend college.
- Shepherded school growth and replication from 72 students to over 2000 students across seven campuses in grades K-12.
- Initiated, designed and implemented data-driven instruction strategies featured in the book Driven by Data, including creating interim assessments, developing analysis templates, and building accountability to student achievement results through monitoring, conferencing and targeted re-teaching.
- Maintained positive, disciplined, nurturing school culture, centered around building a sense of community and high expectations for academic achievement, including leading daily whole-school Community Circles that built character through story-telling and messaging core values.
- Trained, supported and developed dozens of teachers and instructional leaders in instructional techniques through weekly lesson plan review, weekly observation/feedback, and conferencing that are featured in Leverage Leadership.
- Led over one hundred professional development trainings in instructional strategies
- Built parent support and buy-in through family meetings, individual conferences and the Parent Council.

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- Taught US History, and English while leading the school.

Adjunct Professor, Hunter College NY, NY

July 2009 – July 2011

- Appointed by Hunter College as an adjunct professor to train teachers part-time in path-breaking, Master's Degree program called Teacher U in Secondary Social Studies Content instruction

Principal & Teacher Link Community School, Newark NJ July 1985 – June 1989 & July 1991-June 1997

- Led and taught at high performing, alternative middle school for low income Newark students, grades 7-8
- Demonstrated on average 3 years growth of two years time on standardized testing, achieved a 90% high school graduation rate in a city with a 50% drop –out rate, 80% college attendance rate after being with us just 2 years.
- Built positive school culture of achievement and developed student character.
- Taught US History from 1985-89. Principal and Lead teacher from 1991-1997

Teacher, St. Mary's School, Pawtucket Rhode Island

August 1990 – June 1991

- Taught grades 6-8 in English, History and religion at multi-cultural, urban Catholic School.

Community Organizer, Bronx, New York, NWBCC Coalition

August 1984 – July 1985

- Worked as an organizer through the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, organizing for better housing and quality of life conditions for low-income residents in the Bronx.

Videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4TejR20K3Q>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdMuoFTJmqY>

North Star Academy Links:

<http://northstar.uncommonschools.org/nsa/our-school>

North Star Executive Summary

<http://www.nj.gov/education/pr/2013/narrative/80/7320/80-7320-960.html>

Articles:

Closing the Achievement Gap- US Dpt. of Education

http://www2.ed.gov/admins/comm/choice/charterhs/report_pg19.html

Charter Schools: Boon or Bust— NJ Monthly

<https://njmonthly.com/articles/towns-schools/charter-schools-boon-or-bust/>

An Article in Colby College, my alma mater's, magazine

<http://digitalcommons.colby.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1706&context=colbymagazine>

Relay Graduate School of Education

<http://educationnext.org/a-new-type-of-ed-school/>

Referenced in a Book:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=xzp6uUfyYN0C&pg=PA49&lpg=PA49&dq=james+verrilli+no+excuses&source=bl&ots=6s8BL-twHh&sig=e1hoXoxAFQneMZPgGW0eVRMd5oE&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiejqTtnqbOA hVDzmMKHSUuCh8Q6AEIHDAA#v=onepage&q=james%20verrilli%20no%20excuses&f=false>

Awards:

- Uncommon Courage Award—University of Great Falls, Mo
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- U.S. Dept. of Education--Terrell Bell Award for Top 10 Blue Ribbon School Principals in the Nation
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2007
- US DOE Title 1 — School of Distinction for North Star Academy
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- Brown University 100th Anniversary of the Education Dpt.—Distinguished Educator Award
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- Willie Unsoeld Award for Leadership in Experiential Education
1999
- Delbarton Educator Award
1999

April 2001

Charting Success: James Verrilli '83 fashions a school for inner-city Newark

Gerry Boyle
Colby College

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CHARTING SUCCESS

James Verrilli '83 fashions a school for inner-city Newark

By Gerry Boyle '78, photos by Brian Speer



James Verrilli '83 has heard it many times before. The suggestion is that students at North Star Academy in Newark, N.J., do so well on assessment tests because they've been "creamed," skimmed from the top of the pool of thousands of kids in the city's conventional—and troubled—public schools. When the suggestion was made yet again during a recent interview, Verrilli tried not to bristle.

"I would disagree," he said. "I think people say that because poor folks have never had a choice. Rich folks get choices all the time. They choose where they want to live, they choose what community they want their house in. They choose what private school or public school they want their kids to go to. Poor folks don't get a choice. We give them a choice and we automatically say, 'Oh, well, only the best ones will take the choice.' I say, 'Garbage.' I say every parent cares about their kid."

North Star Academy, founded by Verrilli and colleague Norman Atkins, is just three years old and already one of the two top performers on standardized assessment tests among Newark's more than 40 public schools. While Verrilli is quick to acknowledge problems with standardized tests, he also accepts that they are "the coin of the realm" in today's public schools. His bottom line is this: North Star gives poor urban families a choice. When they snap it up, Verrilli couldn't be less surprised.

His respect and empathy for disadvantaged kids has grown over the more than 20 years since he first arrived at Colby from suburban Connecticut. At Colby, faculty members soon raised his awareness of social issues, he said. He volunteered as a Big Brother in Waterville and saw the impact of poverty on his young friend and the boy's family. A Sea-Mester program took Verrilli to the Caribbean, where he was confronted by the poverty there. After graduation, he went back to work on a Sea-Mester ship and saw deplorable living conditions in Haiti. From that experience his course was set: two years in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, working as a tenant organizer in the Bronx and Newark; a stint as a teacher in a private community school in Newark; a graduate degree in education from Brown, where he worked in tough city schools in Providence; back to Newark, where he was principal of Project Link community school.

Then, with Atkins, Verrilli founded North Star, an amalgam of what he had learned in years in inner-city education. "We have a long mission statement," he said, "but if I had to boil it down to one or two sentences, it's to provide a high quality, world-class education to kids in Newark by building a





dent would be asked to apologize to the group—they wore the North Star uniform of dark green school polo shirt and khakis. The school's core values were posted on the wall: caring, respect, responsibility, justice. Students introduced themselves by name with the same greeting: "Welcome to North Star." If they sounded a bit blasé, it could be because the school attracts about 1,000 visitors a year. Recent drop-ins included George W. Bush. Former New Jersey Gov. Christine Whitman has stopped in several times.

This morning, the sound of West African drums called students into a circle, with Verrilli at the center. He told a Vietnamese folktale about a rice farmer who went into debt to send his son to school. The moral, picked out by one student, was that education made the son clever so he could outsmart the evil moneylender. With that reinforcement, classes began.

strong sense of community and providing rigorous academics, in hopes that those two things will give them the foundation to make them the masters of their own destiny."

That may seem a bit high flown on the page; it isn't when you hear it from Verrilli. He and his colleagues are absolutely, 70-hours-a-week serious about giving students from Newark a sanctuary where they can thrive, a refuge from the violence and dysfunction that is part of their world outside of school. Verrilli calls it their "educational justice."

North Star Academy is a public school option very different from the big urban schools from which it accepts students. This charter school is marked by order and discipline, rigorous teaching standards and equally rigorous expectations for learning. On a Tuesday morning in February, it looked like this:

Students gathered in the cafeteria. With one exception—that stu-

In North Star classes, there is no dead air. Fifth grade math was rhythmic recitation of multiplication tables punctuated by questions from the teacher, Julie Jackson. Hands shot into the air. The correct answer was rewarded with a ticket to be added to the pot for a drawing at the end of the week. Then the next table began. "Twelve, twenty-four, thirty-six, forty-eight . . ."

The pace of the class was relentless. Jackson, charged with bringing lagging students up to grade level, had the peripheral vision of a hawk—not to spot transgressions but to ensure that nobody is left behind. "She holds them in the very highest esteem," Verrilli said in the doorway.

A tour of classes in the upper grades showed less recitation but equally intense interaction between teachers and students. There was no fidgeting, much less misbehavior. Earlier, Verrilli had explained the stages of discipline at the school, but it seemed these students would never

Do you think there is a place for a voucher system in American education?

Dee O'Heron Pederson '70

The Blake School, Hopkins, Minn.

I am a passionate advocate for vouchers since I have taught in a public school, a Catholic school and an elite private school, and I sincerely believe that one size does not fit all. Presently, only the wealthy have the option to enroll their children in the school that best suits them, and I feel this is discrimination. Every child should have the best possible opportunity to attend a private school if the public school is not working for them. If the voucher system is instituted I feel very strongly that the government should not be able to legislate how the private schools are run.

Geoff Becker '80

Fiction Writer and Assistant Professor of English, Towson University, Towson, Maryland.

I find the proponents of so-called vouchers to be pushing something at best simplistic, and more likely dishonest. Just try sending your kid to private school with \$1800, or whatever it is that is going to be diverted back into your pocket. I like capitalism as much as the next Wal-Mart shopper, but free-markets are not the answer to everything; as a society, we ought to (and supposedly do) agree that certain things—education, health care—benefit ALL of us. The shameful quality of some public schools needs to be addressed, but by raising teachers' salaries and focusing on what takes place in the classroom.

Frances Birkinbine Welch '72

Instructional Assistant, Cheshire Public Schools-Special Education, Cheshire, Conn.

I strongly disagree with President Bush's voucher system. There is no question that certain schools, especially inner-city schools, are not providing good educational opportunities, but letting the families of any of those schools "jump ship" with money to go elsewhere is not going to help that school improve itself. Substantial money is needed for motivated faculty, adequate facility improvements/repairs and updated resources, all of which are lacking now in so many of these schools.

James Verrilli, at left, recounts a folktale to students during morning “community circle” at North Star Academy, the charter school Verrilli co-founded in Newark, N.J. The school’s disciplined approach to learning has increased achievements and aspirations of students, including those in Julie Jackson’s math class, shown below. Ms. Jackson’s fifth grade students answer a series of rapid-fire questions, an unrelenting pace that continues for much of the period.

step out of line. That, Verrilli said, was the result of weeks and months of very hard work. “It’s a little bit like a boot camp experience when they first come,” he said. “They’ve had a lot of experience with adults who say things they don’t mean. And we mean what we say.”

They say there is no fighting. No disrespect toward teachers or peers. And no place to hide. “We know everything they do, we watch everything they do,” Verrilli said. “The standards of behavior here, it’s a much higher bar than it is in the schools they come from. In the schools they come from there’s a lot of chaos, a lot of violence. It varies from teacher to teacher. You might have a good teacher, there might be a lot of order in the room. You don’t have a good teacher, it’s chaotic.”

Because of its small size, North Star’s teachers are evaluated frequently. Because of the longer school day and school year (September to late July), they tend to be dedicated by nature. They gauge their effectiveness not only by assessment tests but by students’ aspirations. “They told me I can do anything I want to,” said ninth grader Marron Pickett, “so I want to go to Harvard. None of my family members went to college so that’s something I definitely want to do.”

Verrilli said the job won’t be done until North Star places its first class of students in colleges three years from now. And though he’s



pleased with the school’s performance, he is the first to admit that the North Star model isn’t the solution to all of the problems facing the nation’s schools.

“I think we have one of many answers,” he said, “a piece of the puzzle here. The problem is people are looking for simple answers. There’s no simple answer. The problem is poverty. And until we solve that, we’re not going to solve the educational problems of this country.”

Are you encouraged or discouraged by the current education reform debate?

Michelle Farrell '01

Education minor

There seems to be an extreme amount of “crisis talk” surrounding the subject of education reform. At this point I am encouraged by the current debate because through the discourse we could arrive at some valuable changes in how we “do school.” Unfortunately, oftentimes when reform is considered the teachers (direct educators of the students) are not heard from, and more important, students are not able to voice their opinions in the discussions.

Cindy Rosenbaum '01

Education minor

I am both encouraged and discouraged. I am encouraged by people like Alfie Kohn [author and outspoken critic of the use of grades and test scores] who challenge current assumptions about education. People like Kohn take the perspective of, and certainly listen to, students, parents and teachers. I become discouraged by many articles I read in the major newspapers about state and federal politicians who are willing to put their faith in a single measure of success or failure: standardized test scores. I feel that standardized test scores should be considered as a way to look at what is happening within a school, or a classroom, but not the only way to do so.

Karin Felmly '01

Education minor

For the most part, I am encouraged by the education reform debate because it shows that our nation is finally paying much-needed attention to schools and young children. While a solution may not be easy to reach, considering the debates on testing standards and controversy over achievement levels, awareness is a crucial first step. After learning from Colby professors and working for the Department of Education in D.C., I now realize that there are people who are truly devoted to improving education in America. Education reform is not a lost cause, it is merely a challenge.

North Star Academy Charter School of Newark

Newark, N.J.

School Profile: Selected Variables	
Year First Chartered and Authorizer	1997, state
Grades and Enrollment	5–12 and 125 (high school only)
Student Ethnicity	85% African-American 0% Asian American 14% Hispanic 0% White
Special Education	7%
Free and Reduced-price Lunch	90%
Graduation Rate	100%*
Annual Cost per Student	\$9,090

*100% in 2004 and one student did not graduate in 2005 and will finish in 2006.

Source: School records data from 2005–06

North Star was born when James Verrilli, a teacher in Newark public schools, and Norman Atkins, a journalist running a private foundation, set out to better the dismal reality facing Newark inner-city high school students. In the country's second poorest city, only 26 percent of graduating seniors were planning to go to college, only 6 percent actually going, and a mere 2 percent making it all the way through. Verrilli's and Atkins' vision was to create an uncommon public school that exceeded community expectations, with a staff that would aggressively combat the achievement gap, making sure every student was academically, culturally, and socially prepared to succeed in college. Originally North Star Academy was started as a middle school, but as parents saw the poor options for students after eighth grade, they asked North Star to create a high school, and its eight-member board, including two parents, agreed.

It is no surprise, eight years later, that North Star Academy's waiting list is over 1,600 students. Families know that if their children are selected through the lottery to attend, they will work hard, successfully complete high school, and go on to college. The reason, according to one visitor, is that North Star "leaders are determined not only to bridge the achievement gap but to obliterate it."

Currently in its ninth year, North Star Academy has opened a second middle school, adding one additional fifth-grade cohort of 75 students. The plan is to create two middle schools to feed into one high school in order to expand

the high school course offerings and curricular program. In collaboration with Uncommon Schools, Inc., the school will open two K–4 schools over the next five years and by the 2010–11 school year North Star Academy will serve a maximum of 1,300 students across five campuses—two K–4 schools, two 5–8 schools, and one high school. The school continues to recruit students from Newark public schools, with staff and others pounding the pavement to spread the word at churches, grocery stores, and local elementary schools, drawing students who are typically performing below the district average and effectively preparing them for college. And while working hard for



this preparation, every student pledges to live by the school's core values of caring, respect, responsibility, and justice.

School Operations and Educational Program

North Star now serves 384 students in grades 5–12, 99 percent African-American or Latino, operating on an 11-month school year with an extended day program. One hundred and twenty-five students are in high school. North Star Academy's devotion to preparing these students to succeed in college and life beyond is reflected in its graduation requirements. All students take four years of English, math, science, and history, and three years of foreign language, physical education, and arts, surpassing the New Jersey state requirements. Course offerings include AP-level classes in calculus, U.S. history, U.S. government, and English, as well as honors-level classes in math and science. All other classes are untracked and provide honors-level college preparatory work. North Star Academy students also are required to pass the N.J. High School Proficiency Assessment, complete a senior thesis as well as a senior composition, take the SAT at least twice, complete 40 hours of community service, and apply to at least two colleges.

One of North Star's most innovative features is the level of personalization and commitment to ensuring student mastery of the content standards. The school has developed a set of interim assessments, aligned with state standards and the curriculum, given every six to eight weeks. Results are analyzed by the teacher, department chair, and administrator, who look to see who

has mastered specific standards for that unit and who has not. It is then the teacher's responsibility to either re-teach the material in a different way if several students have not mastered it or to provide individual tutoring during afternoon study hall, before or after school, or during lunch, to ensure that each student has mastered those concepts before moving on to new ones. To support student learning, North Star also provides a Saturday school where students can receive extra help.

The school culture is first established in middle school with a morning circle, when all students and teachers gather to the call of the djembe drum. This is a time when students chant affirmations that they will go on to college and apologize to the community for any disciplinary infractions, such as tardies and poor conduct, and when teachers and students share positive stories about students. At one meeting, a teacher related that over the weekend every eighth grader but one had attended Saturday school and worked hard. Another shared that her students created a project of sewing slavery costumes and enacted scenes from a book they recently finished reading. One student thanked her peers for carrying her books while she was on crutches. Another acknowledged the helpfulness of classmates who helped her with homework and, in particular, a challenging assignment.

North Star gives students opportunities they would not have if attending their neighborhood schools. "If you get good grades, you can go on special programs," explains one student, "like I went to New Zealand last summer with 12 students and two teachers." Each summer students participate in special internships and programs,

such as a journalism program at Princeton University or the Junior Statesman program at Georgetown University. Another student talks enthusiastically about his summer business internship at Lehman Brothers.

Family Involvement and Partnerships

Communication between North Star Academy staff and families is strong. Typically, teachers are calling home about once a week to stay in contact with families. Every Thursday, students bring home a folder containing notices for parents and things for them to sign and return to the school. Unlike many high schools, North Star does not mail report cards. Parents must come to school to pick them up, at which time they have a conference with their child's teachers. Parents are full of praise for the school. One parent explains that her son was struggling in elementary school, but at North Star he caught up thanks to the teachers and the one-on-one tutoring. She likes the fact that students are kept really busy and do not have time to hang out and get in trouble. The school has a PTA, and two parents serve on the board. Parent committees help to organize schoolwide events, such as a Latino celebration, which was very well attended even though Latinos represent only 14 percent of the student body.

North Star has developed a few partnerships with community organizations and businesses to provide students with exceptional opportunities, often the kind that affluent students would have, that help to prepare them for college and life beyond Newark and high school. For example, students in good academic standing can

spend the school's summer-session month off campus in internships or at work sites, or traveling to other countries, or participating in outdoor leadership programs. Deloitte Consulting adopted the senior class and has been providing mentors for these 20 students since their sophomore year. The law firm Kirkpatrick & Lockhart Nicholson Graham LLP adopted the junior class and pays for them to take online SAT preparation courses. The school is in the fourth year of a five-year federal GEAR-UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) grant, partnering with Rutgers-Newark, to provide North Star students with tutoring and presentations about college.

Governing for Accountability

North Star Executive Director Paul Bambrick-Santoyo oversees the interim assessment process, develops the school budget, completes all of the bureaucratic requirements, including federal, state, and district forms, and meets monthly with the board. Purposely kept small for effective decisionmaking, the board of North Star Academy meets every two months to oversee the policy and school operations. There are two parents on the board and representatives from the Newark community that include a retired state senator, a former principal, and business community members.

Administrators at North Star truly are instructional leaders. High school principal Julie Jackson holds clearly articulated expectations for teachers. She tells them, "It's not enough to teach the curriculum; it is your responsibility to make sure students master the standards and concepts." In fact, a distinctive feature at North Star is its process for monitoring



student understanding and gauging the effectiveness of instruction. Trained in conducting classroom observations, Jackson and her North Star middle and elementary school principal colleagues do a daily walk-through, visiting at least 85 percent of the classrooms in the school and giving informal feedback. With data from these observations and from interim student assessments, teachers use the North Star Assessment Analysis Sheet and Instruction Plan template to draw connections between their instruction and student performance and decide what they need to do to help students master the standards. As Bambrick-Santoyo explains, if a student is not doing well, this process requires teachers to immediately ask the question, “How can I teach this differently or revisit this concept so that the student will achieve mastery?” He sees his role as actively working with teachers, raising questions, observing instruction and providing feedback, supporting curriculum development and lesson planning, and strategizing on an ongoing basis. Professional development is conducted internally and aims at raising student academic achievement.

Ninety-five percent of the 2005 graduates are attending four-year universities, such as the

University of Chicago, Mount Holyoke College, Boston College, Syracuse University, and Rutgers University. North Star Academy is keeping track of how its graduates are doing in college. Monitoring how students are doing in college informs practice at North Star. For example, the first class did not do well in college calculus, Bambrick-Santoyo recalls. “That was our problem: we needed to prepare them better.” When they learned that graduates were struggling with college math, they promptly reexamined their curriculum to increase the rigor and accelerate learning at North Star.

One reason daily attendance averages higher than for Newark School District high schools and for the state is that students love the small school community and appreciate “dedicated teachers who will come early and stay late to give you one-on-one help. The teachers make sure you understand, they won’t let you fall behind,” says one student. A sophomore explains, “This is my home away from home.” At regular public school, one junior says, “kids give up and there are a lot of fights. Here the teachers don’t give up on you. They are working for your future, to help you go to college.”

North Star Academy: Evidence of Closing the Achievement Gap

Over the past three years, North Star Academy students have consistently outperformed neighborhood and Newark district schools on state tests, scoring higher than the statewide average in New Jersey.

One hundred percent of North Star Academy’s 12th-grade general education students in the class of 2005 passed the New Jersey High School Statewide Assessment (HSPA), compared to 85.1 percent of New Jersey students statewide, 44.2 percent of the Newark district students, and 19.5 percent from neighborhood schools.

North Star has the highest rate of four-year college acceptance and attendance of any school in the state of New Jersey, regardless of socioeconomic level served.

Jamey Verrilli's Collected Student Data 1999-2011

Principal North Star Academy Downtown Middle School
Using data from the Stanford 9 Test, State Assessments
NJ GEPA and later NJASK and the Terra Nova Exam



Middle School Results

1999

NSA DTMS Stanford Nine Achievement Test Results 1999

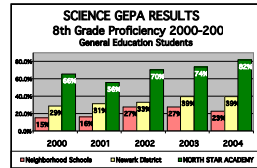
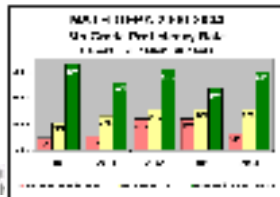
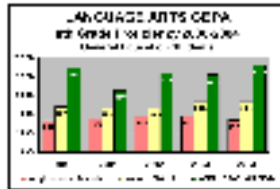
STANFORD NINE ACHIEVEMENT TEST RESULTS 1999									
Grade	Reading	Language	Math	Science	History	Art	Music	Physical Education	Foreign Language
5	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
6	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
7	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
8	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
9	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
10	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
11	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
12	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
13	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
14	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
15	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
16	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
17	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
18	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
19	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
20	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
21	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
22	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
23	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
24	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
25	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
26	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
27	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
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98	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
99	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
100	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54



Middle School Results

2000- 2004

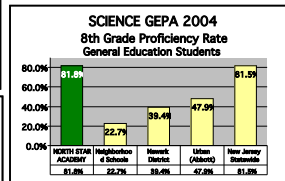
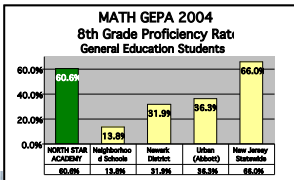
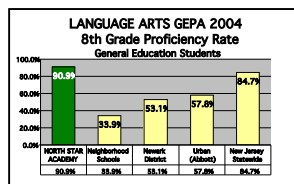
NSA DTMS NJ GEPA Results 2000- 2004



Middle School Results

2004

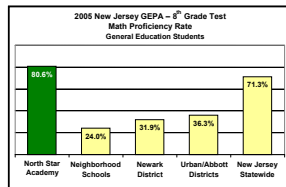
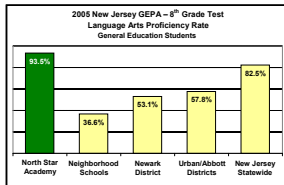
NSA DTMS NJ GEPA 8th Grade 2003 -2004



Middle School Results

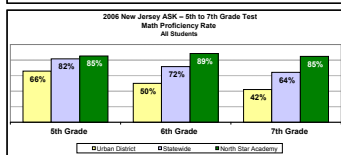
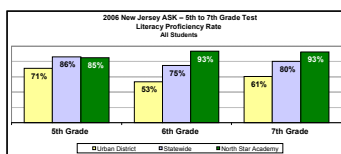
2005

NSA DTMS NJ GEPA Test Results 2004- 2005

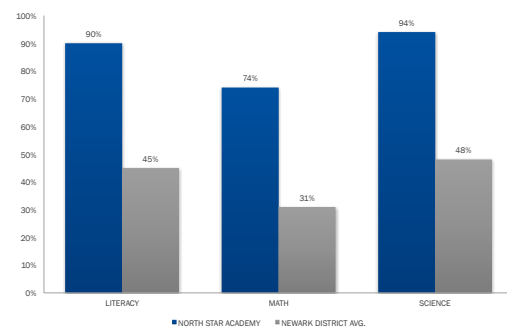


Middle School Results 2006

NSA DTMS NJASK Results Grades 5-7 2005- 2006



NSA DTMS NJ GEPA Results compared with the district 2005-6



Middle School Results

2007

National Recognition:

- **2006-07 USDOE Title I Distinguished School**
 - 2 schools selected in NJ: 50 nationwide
- **2006-07 USDOE Charter High School Distinction**
 - 7 charter high schools selected nationwide for USDOE publication
- **Strong Achievement Results**
 - Top 1% of all urban schools in NJ
- **Impact on schools nationwide**
 - 2,500 visitors to North Star in past ten years
 - 300+ schools are explicitly using North Star systems of culture & data to drive improvement
 - Highest achieving urban schools in Baltimore, Chicago & NY benefited from North Star systems to increase achievement
 - "North Star is the standard by which urban schools should be compared"

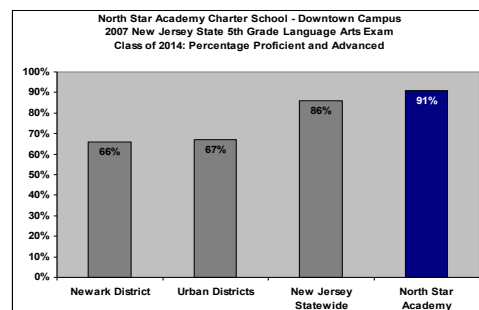


Literacy Achievement: NJ State Test Results

2006-07



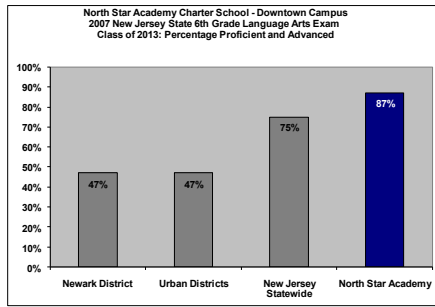
North Star Academy Downtown – 5th Grade ELA



*2007 Newark result is preliminary; urban and state results are for 2006.



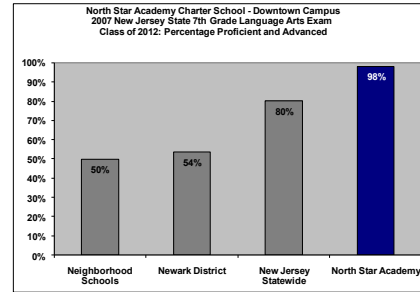
North Star Academy Downtown – 6th Grade ELA



*Urban and state results are for 2006.



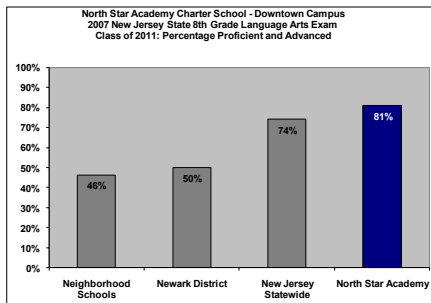
North Star Academy Downtown – 7th Grade ELA



*State results are for 2006.



North Star Academy Downtown – 8th Grade ELA



*State results are for 2006.

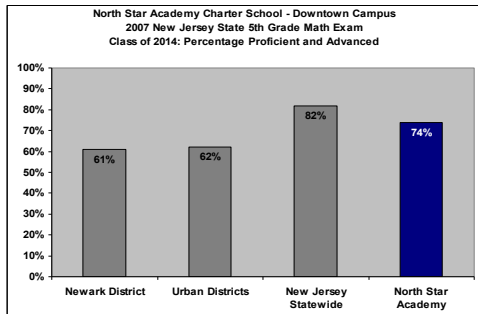


Mathematics Achievement: NJ State Test Results

2006-07



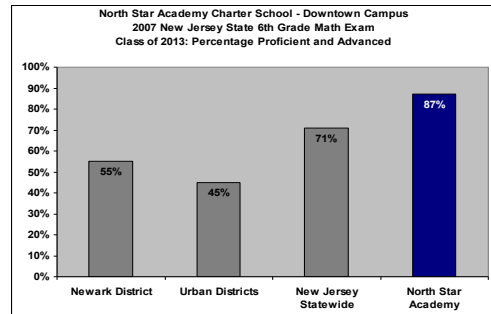
North Star Academy Downtown – 5th Grade Math



*2007-Newark result is preliminary; urban and state results are for 2006.



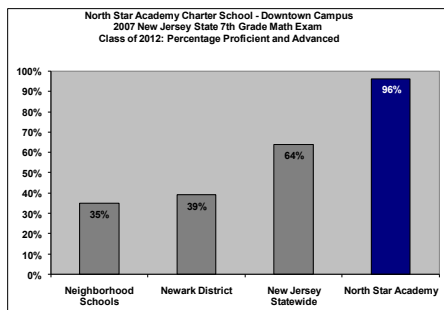
North Star Academy Downtown – 6th Grade Math



*Urban and state results are for 2006.



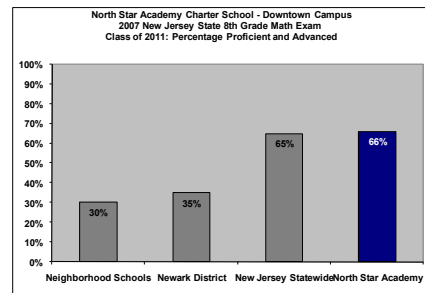
North Star Academy Downtown – 7th Grade Math



*Urban and state results are for 2006.

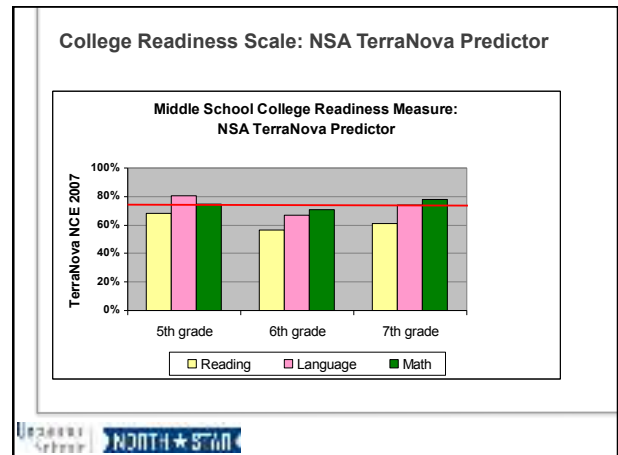
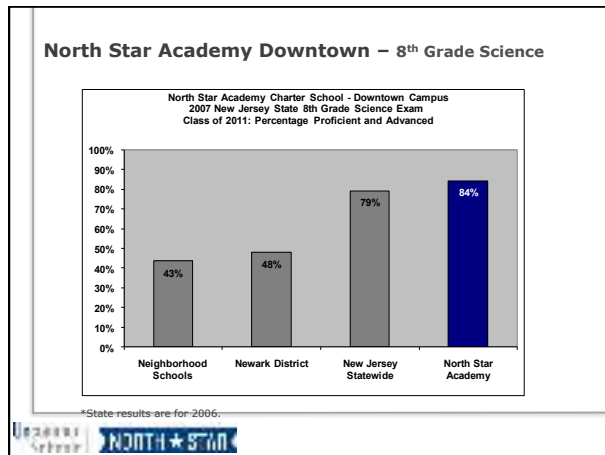


North Star Academy Downtown – 8th Grade Math

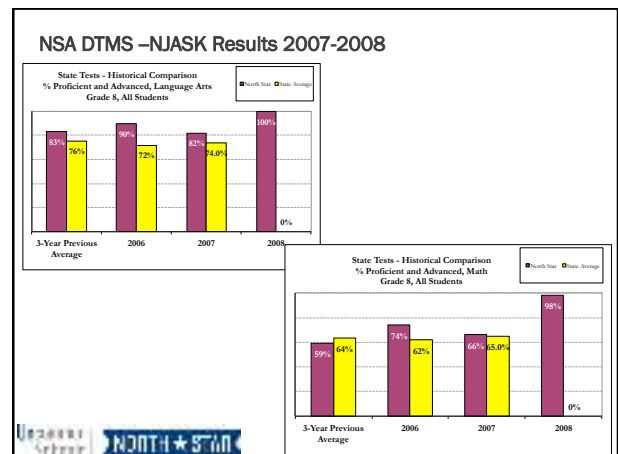


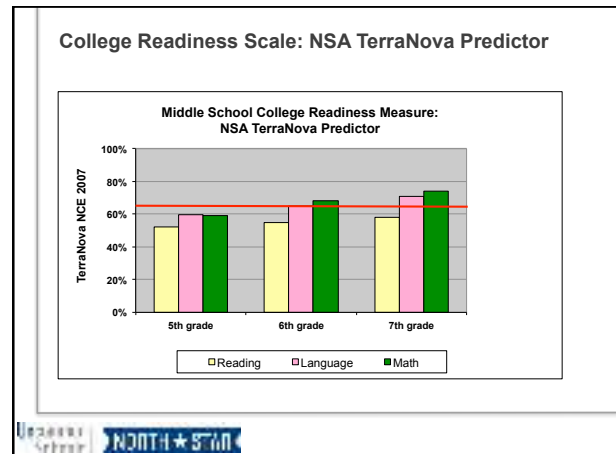
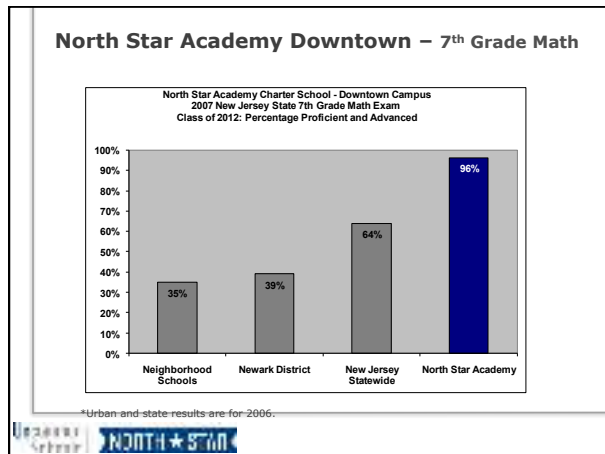
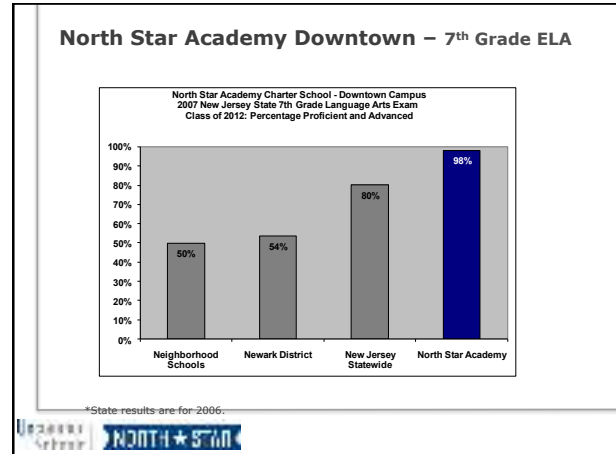
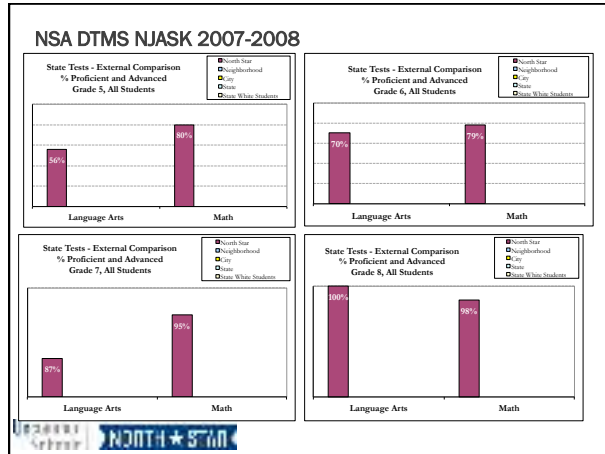
*State results are for 2006.





Middle School Results 2008





National Recognition:**2007-08 Education Trust Dispelling the Myth Award**

- 1 of 3 schools chosen from 40,000 schools nationwide for closing achievement gap

Strong Achievement Results

- Uncommon Schools & North Star's results the highest of any charter school organization in the country
- Top 1% of all urban schools in NJ

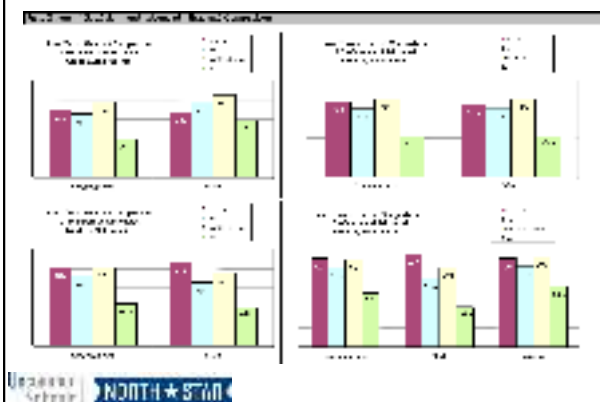
Impact on schools nationwide

- 3,000 visitors to North Star in past eleven years:
 - » Future Leaders, London
 - » Akansha, India
- 350+ schools are explicitly using North Star systems of culture & data to drive improvement
- Highest achieving urban schools in Baltimore, Chicago & NY benefited from North Star systems to increase achievement
- "North Star is the standard by which urban schools should be compared"



Middle School Results

2009

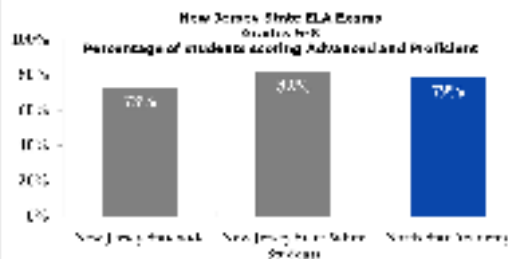
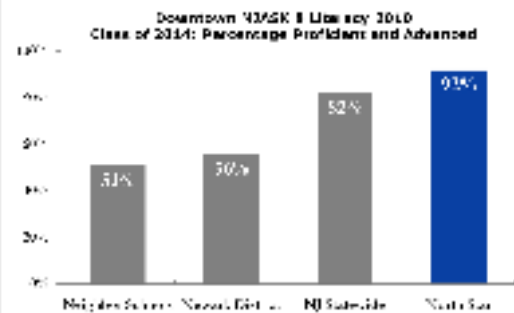
NSA DTMS NJ ASK Test Results 2009

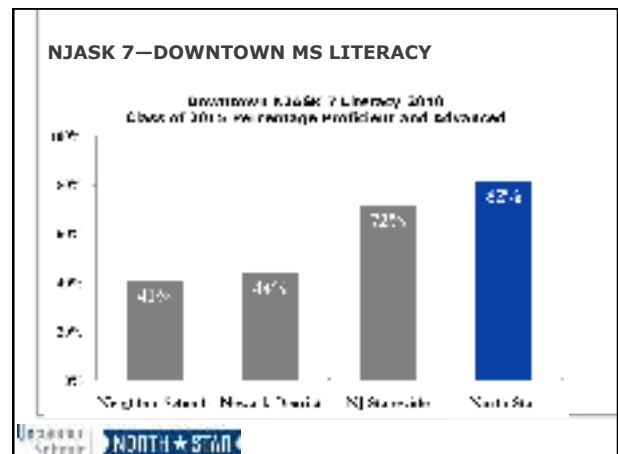
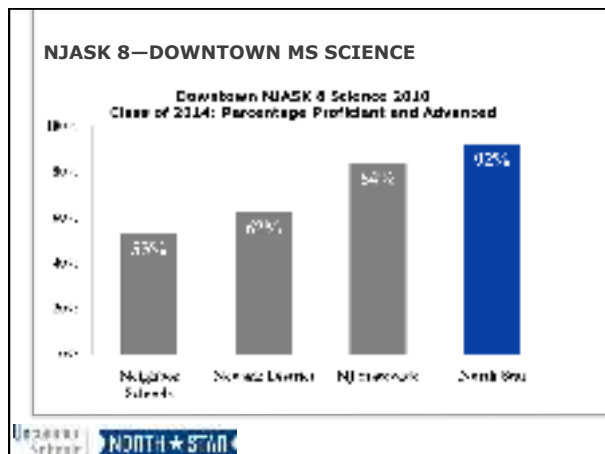
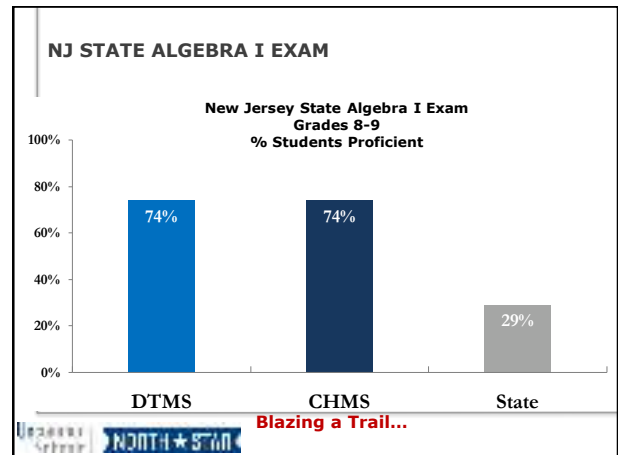
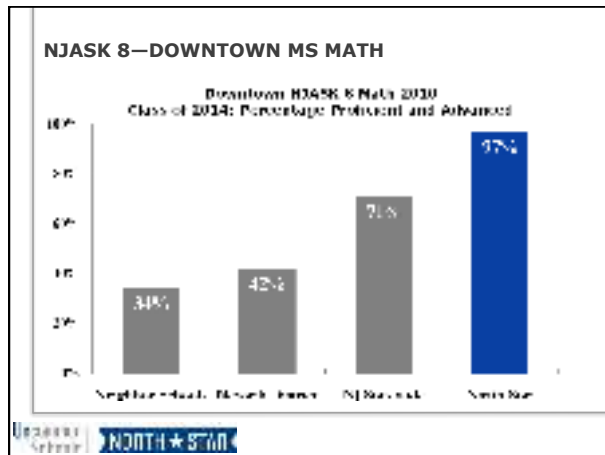
Middle School Results

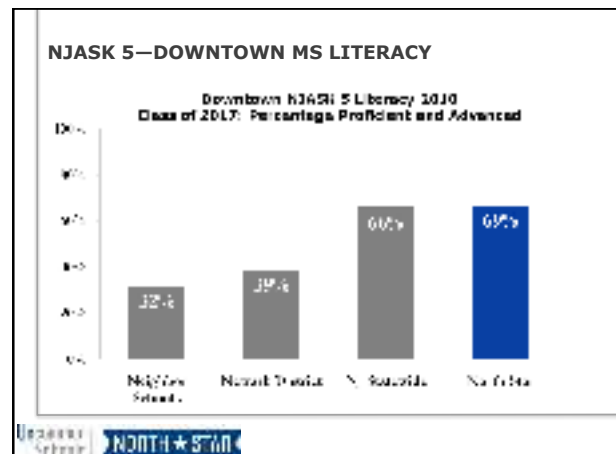
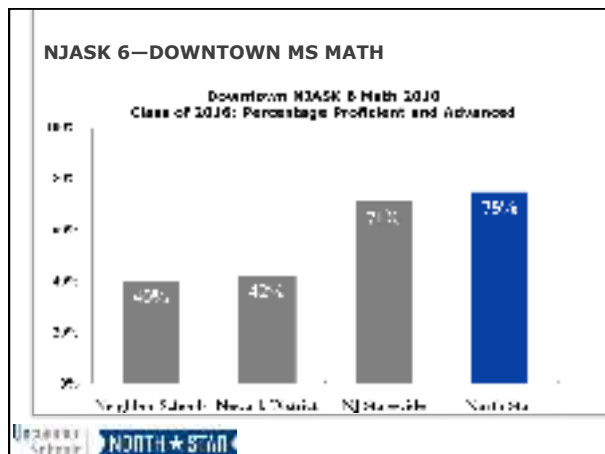
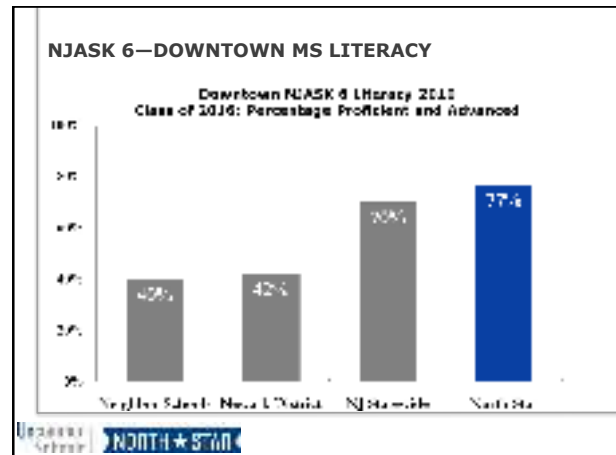
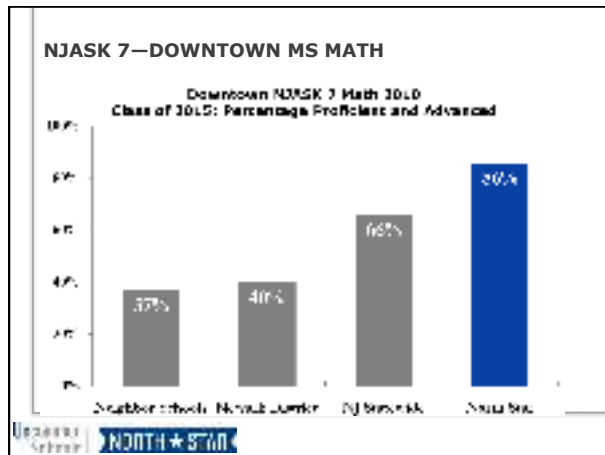
2010

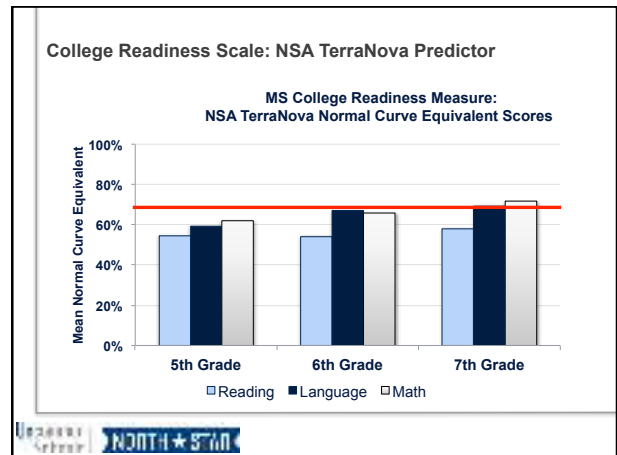
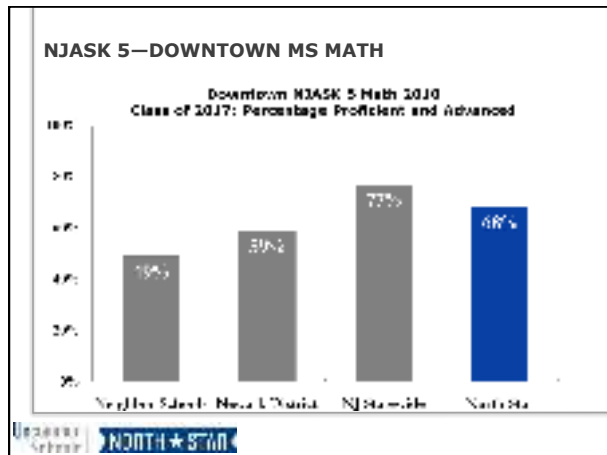
National Recognition:

- **Strong Achievement Results**
 - Uncommon Schools & North Star's results the highest of any charter school organization in the country
 - Top 2% of all urban schools in NJ
- **The Cartel**
 - Video of NSA lottery and other NSA cameos
- **Johns Hopkins CTY Top Ten School in NJ**
 - One of only 2 urban schools chosen
- **Impact on schools nationwide**
 - 4,000 visitors to North Star in past twelve years
 - 500+ schools are explicitly using North Star systems of culture & data to drive improvement
 - Highest achieving urban schools in Baltimore, Chicago, New Orleans, Oakland & NY benefited from North Star systems to increase achievement
 - "North Star is the gold standard"

**Closing the Achievement Gap in Math – NJ****Closing the Achievement Gap in English – NJ****NJASK 8—DOWNTOWN MS LITERACY**



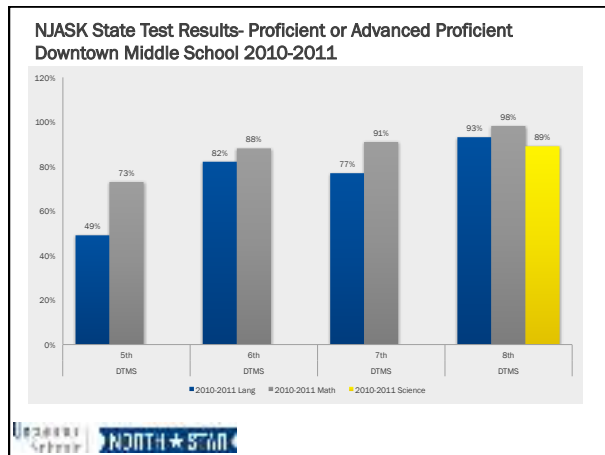




Middle School Results

2011





Middle School Results 2012

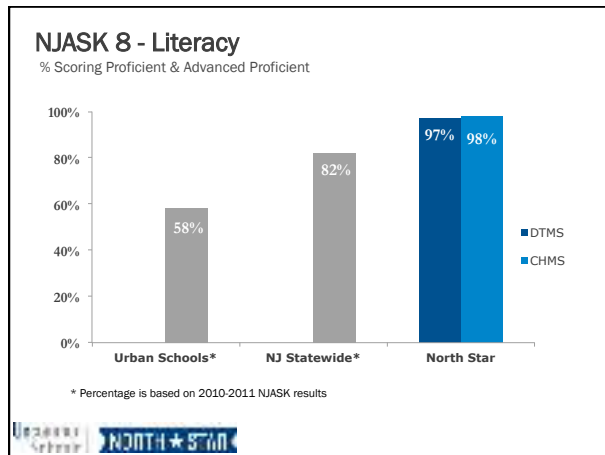
NJASK Results Literacy

By the Numbers:

2%

North Star 8th graders were in the top 2% of all New Jersey schools in Mathematics and Literacy.





Closing the Achievement Gap

College Alumni Results

1997-2012: 190 Alumni

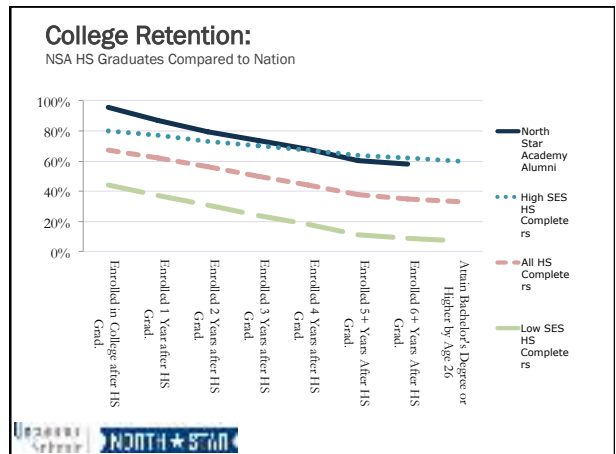
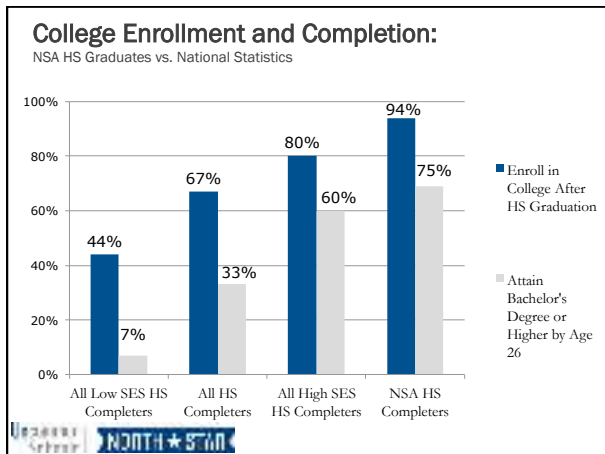
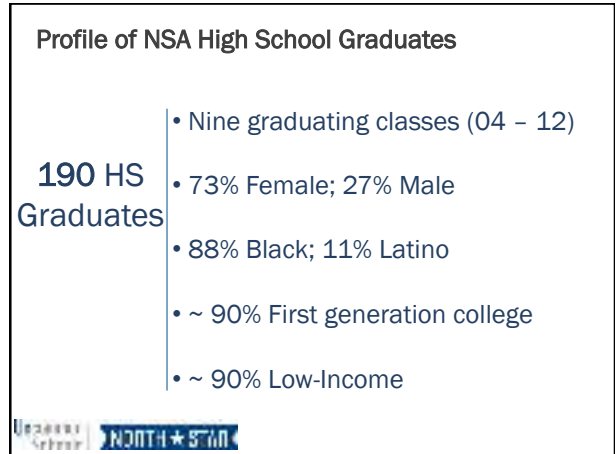
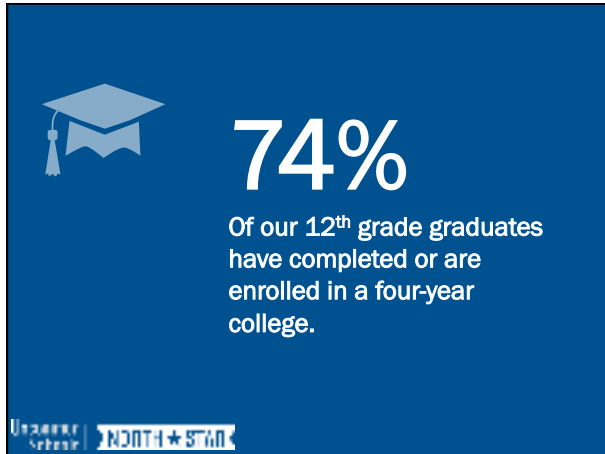
Graduates of NSA...

Uncommon Schools | NORTH STAR

100%

The number of North Star high school students accepted to 4-year colleges, compared to 23% of Newark high school students

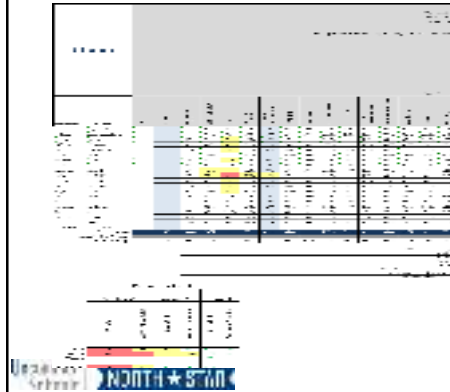
Uncommon Schools | NORTH STAR



Jamey Verrilli 8th Grade US History Interim Assessment Results

2011-2012 School Year- Verrilli 8th Grade History Teacher
The Interim Assessments are cumulative so each successive one is more challenging.

1st Interim Assessment Results October 2011

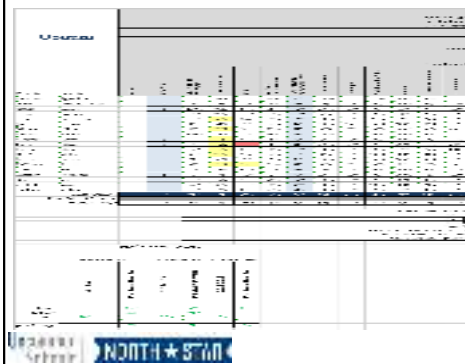


Highlights:

Class
Average 89%

% at or
above 80%
=94%

2nd Interim Assessment Results December 2011

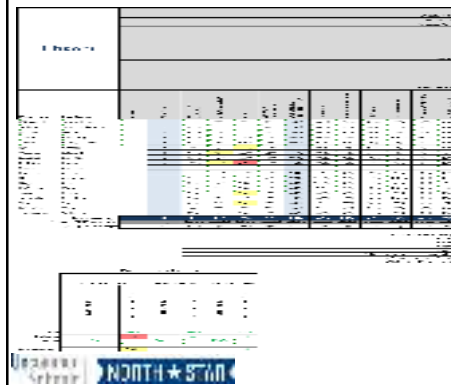


Highlights:

Class
Average 90%

% at or
above 80%
=94%

3rd Interim Assessment Results February 2012

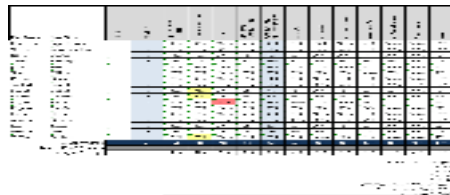


Highlights:

Class
Average 88%

% at or
above 80%
=94%

4th Interim Assessment Results March 2012



Highlights:

Class
Average 86%

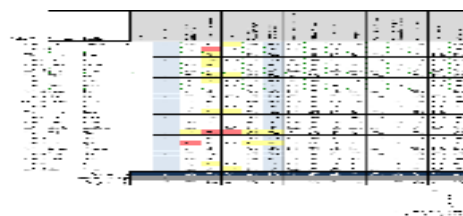
% at or
above 80%
=88%

Upperville School NORTH STAR

Jamey Verrilli 8th Grade US History Interim Assessment Results

2012-13 School Year- Verrilli as 8th Grade History Teacher
The Interim Assessments are cumulative so each successive one is more challenging.

1st Interim Assessment Results October 2012



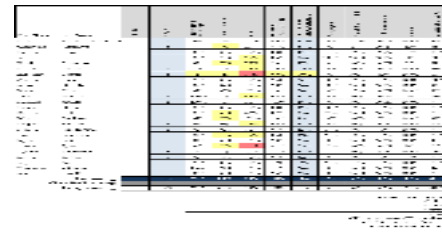
Highlights:

Class
Average 87%

% at or
above 80%
=88%

Upperville School NORTH STAR

2nd Interim Assessment Results December 2012



Highlights:

Class
Average 88%

% at or
above 80%
=84%

Upperville School NORTH STAR

