

**2004-2005 No Child Left Behind - Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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*U.S. Department of Education*

**REVISED MARCH 21, 2005**

**Cover Sheet**

**Type of School:** Middle

**Name of Principal:** Mr. James Kaishian

**Official School Name:** Briarcliff Manor Middle School

**School Mailing Address:** 444 Pleasantville Road, Briarcliff Manor, New York 10510-1922

**County:** Westchester

**School Code Number:** 661402020004

**Telephone:** (914) 769-6343

**Fax:** (914) 769-6375

**Website/URL:** www.briarcliffschools.org **E-mail:** jkaishian@briarcliffschools.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Superintendent:** Dr. Frances Wills

**District Name:** Briarcliff Manor Union Free School District **Tel.:** (914)941-8880

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of School Board President:** Dr. Arlene Rosen

I have reviewed the information in this package, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

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## **PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

**[Include this page in the school's application as page 2.]**

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

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades K-12. (Schools with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has not been in school improvement status or been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's adequate yearly progress requirement in the 2004-2005 school year.
3. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, it has foreign language as a part of its core curriculum.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 1999 and has not received the 2003 or 2004 *No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon Schools Award*.
5. The nominated school or district is not refusing the OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
6. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if the OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
7. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school, or the school district as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
8. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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All data are the most recent year available.

**DISTRICT** (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district:
- 1 - Elementary schools
  - 1 - Middle schools
  - 0 - Junior high schools
  - 1 - High schools
  - 0 - Other

### 3 - TOTAL

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: \$20,283

Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: \$13,505

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

- ☐ Urban or large central city
- ☐ Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
- ☒ Suburban
- ☐ Small city or town in a rural area
- ☐ Rural

4. 5 - Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.

\_\_\_\_\_ If fewer than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?

5. Number of students as of October 1 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school only:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total	Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK				7	94	67	161
K				8	72	52	124
1				9			
2				10			
3				11			
4				12			
5				Other			
6	64	70	134				
TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL →							419

*[Throughout the document, round numbers to avoid decimals.]*

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the students in the school:
- 96% White
  - 1% Black or African American
  - 1% Hispanic or Latino
  - 2% Asian/Pacific Islander
  - 0% American Indian/Alaskan Native
  - 100% Total**

Use only the five standard categories in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of the school.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 0%

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

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	1
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	1
(3)	Subtotal of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	2
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1	418
(5)	Subtotal in row (3) divided by total in row (4)	.00478
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	.478

8. Limited English Proficient students in the school: 1%  
 4 Total Number Limited English Proficient  
 Number of languages represented: 3  
 Specify languages: Japanese, Malayalam (India), Hebrew
9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 1%  
 Total number students who qualify: 2

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families or the school does not participate in the federally-supported lunch program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: 8%

50 = Total Number of Students Served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

<b>1</b> Autism	___ Orthopedic Impairment
___ Deafness	<b>11</b> Other Health Impaired
___ Deaf-Blindness	<b>34</b> Specific Learning Disability
___ Emotional Disturbance	<b>4</b> Speech or Language Impairment
___ Hearing Impairment	___ Traumatic Brain Injury
___ Mental Retardation	___ Visual Impairment Including Blindness
___ Multiple Disabilities	

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

**Number of Staff**

	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-Time</b>
Administrator(s)	2	
Classroom teachers	29	3
Special resource teachers/specialists	10	1
Paraprofessionals	17	
Support staff	4	
<b>Total number</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>4</b>

12. Average school student-“classroom teacher” ratio: 21:1
13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. The student dropout rate is defined by the state. The student drop-off rate is the difference between the number of entering students and the number of exiting students from the same cohort. (From the same cohort, subtract the number of exiting students from the number of entering students; divide that number by the number of entering students; multiply by 100 to get the percentage drop-off rate.) Briefly explain in 100 words or fewer any major discrepancy between the dropout rate and the drop-off rate. (Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates and only high schools need to supply drop-off rates.)

	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001	1999-2000
Daily student attendance	96%	97%	97%	97%	97%
Daily teacher attendance	97%	98%	97%	97%	97%
Teacher turnover rate	3%	9%	18%	1%	1%
Student dropout rate (middle/high)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Student drop-off rate (high school)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

### **Part III - Summary**

Briarcliff Manor is a suburban affluent community located in Westchester County with a population of approximately 8,000 people.

At Briarcliff Middle School, our mission is to facilitate the journey from childhood to adolescence and adulthood that inspires students to seek challenges in a variety of areas, and that recognizes and cultivates the strengths of the individual. Incorporating the “essential elements of standards-focused middle level schools and programs” as outlined by New York State Education Department, the Briarcliff Middle School provides a team structure that creates a small, heterogeneous learning community bridging the self-contained elementary classroom and the departmentalized high school program. Within the context of a nurturing environment that builds self-esteem and the confidence to take risks as learners, students move from mastery of basic academic skills to higher cognitive thinking, reflection, and inquiry through independent and self-directed learning projects and by experiencing productive social interactions through group tasks designed to encourage leadership and involve community service.

At the heart of the Briarcliff Middle School’s effort to meet the learning needs of each student is the grade-level team of teachers working together with an emphasis on positive and productive student-teacher interactions. The team identifies individual student’s strengths and needs, develops appropriate learning expectations for each student tied to state and local standards, and ensures that all students experience personal academic success. Data assembled from results on New York State assessments and local measures are examined by teachers to shape and align instruction and curriculum where appropriate and to meet on-going improvement goals. Organized around team planning time, regular meetings are held, often including parents and students, to inform the development of individual learning plans and design appropriate instructional interventions. Academic support and intervention is available through “learning strategy” classes for students who require assistance. Wherever possible, students with special needs are included in the regular core program. Collaborative classes, taught by a subject area teacher and special education teacher, promote learning for all students. Alternate classes are available in Math and English. Resource rooms supplement the mainstream program and one self-contained class ensures that most students are able to obtain appropriate support within the District.

Briarcliff’s rigorous, standards-based academic program offers all students the core subjects, English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, and World Language (Spanish or French) that meet every day. In the sixth grade, a “call-back” program has been introduced to add double periods in each core subject once a week. In the eighth grade, accelerated math and earth science are offered with an admission policy as open as possible to support student motivation and interest as well as ability. The earth science class culminates in the Regents examination, and becomes part of the student’s high school transcript. A range of diverse exploratory courses provides another educational opportunity for students to apply knowledge. To further student exploration of their own strengths and affinities, a varied extra-curricular modified athletic program supports physical fitness and team play. Valuing the middle school philosophy that all students should be included in activities and should strive for their “personal best,” there are no “cuts” on the modified teams.

Challenged to maintain the distinct identity of Briarcliff Middle School in a campus shared with the high school, the principal and staff have utilized the opportunity provided by a new separate facility to maximize the emotional support that defines a developmentally appropriate program for pre-teens. The guidance counselor and psychologist work with administration as integral partners in creating a safe environment for learning by promoting character education, focusing on tolerance and appreciation of differences, establishing a clear code of conduct and consequences, linking students with teachers in small learning groups, practicing inter-personal and leadership skills. Furthering Briarcliff’s vision of high standards for student academic performance and personal and social development is a strong parent and community partnership reflected in a shared decision-making committee, parent volunteers, and community out-reach.

## **Part IV – Indicator of Academic Success**

### **Part IV, #1 – Explanation of Assessment Results**

Each year, eighth grade students throughout New York State take state exams in English Language Arts and math to assess the extent to which they have met the Learning Standards. These tests require students to demonstrate their ability to read, write, and listen, and to synthesize and apply information in these content areas. In addition, these tests also show whether students are receiving the foundation of knowledge necessary to succeed in later grades. The state requires that students who are not making appropriate progress toward the standards receive academic intervention services. The state exams do not reveal the total body of knowledge a student has acquired in these content areas; therefore, student achievement in Briarcliff is measured using multiple types of assessments.

Achievement on the State exams is reported in terms of mean scores and the percentage of students scoring at four levels of achievement. Level 4 is defined as students who exceed the standards and are moving toward high performance on the Regents examination. Level 3 is defined as students who meet the standards and, with continued steady growth, should pass the Regents examination. Level 2 is defined as students who need extra help to meet the standards and pass the Regents examination. Level 1 is defined as students who have serious academic deficiencies.

In English Language Arts, students at Level 4 exceed standards by consistently showing thorough understanding of written and oral texts. They can interpret and analyze a variety of essays, using significant literary elements and synthesize information from related articles to draw conclusions and form insightful opinions with extensive examples from text. Writing is consistently well-organized and thoroughly developed; language is sophisticated and effective, with few or no errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation. At Level 3, students meet the state standard by showing understanding somewhat beyond the literal range of intermediate level written and oral text. They can infer, predict, draw some conclusions, categorize ideas and make connections between texts, using some relevant support. Writing is generally organized and developed, with some sense of voice; minor errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation do not interfere with comprehension. At Level 2, students do not meet the state standard and need extra help because the exam shows only partial understanding of written and oral texts. They can locate information, make basic inferences, use context clues to understand words, and make a few connections between texts, using limited support. Students write on a few familiar topics; writing shows some focus and basic organization, using simple sentence structure and vocabulary. Students follow some rules for correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation, but errors sometimes interfere with comprehension. Students at Level 1 have serious academic deficiencies. In 2004, 89% of our total population scored at Level 3 or 4, indicating that they met or exceeded the standards. 56% of the special education students performed at Level 3 or 4. Since 2000-2001, there has been a steady increase of students who met the standards within the disaggregated student group. In 2000-2001, the 27% within the disaggregated student group met the standard. In 2001-2002, 41% within the disaggregated student group met the standard and in 2002-2003, 44% of this group met the standard. The 2003-2004 results show that 56% of this group met the standards. These results are due to the number of support classes that have been designed and implemented (i.e. Organizational Strategies and English Language Arts Strategies).

In math, students at Level 4 exceed the state standards by showing evidence of superior knowledge of key ideas; consistently demonstrating proficiency and accuracy in processing and solutions; clearly communicating and articulating mathematical insights; processing a wide range of problem-solving strategies and identifying the most efficient means to a solution. At Level 3, students meet the state standard by demonstrating consistent use of prime numbers, factors, multiples; understanding of decimals, rational numbers, roots, order of operations, congruence, similarity; apply formulas, ratio, proportions; visualize, represent and transform 3D shapes; evaluate data from graphical displays; estimate time, distance, capacity, use a protractor; understand and use Pythagorean theorem, and trigonometric functions. At Level 2, students do not meet the state standard and need extra help to go beyond a very basic understanding of essential mathematical concepts such as mean, median, and mode; percentages, measurement and qualities of geometric shapes. Students at Level 1 have serious academic deficiencies. In 2004, 90% of our total population scored at Level 3 or 4, indicating that they met or exceeded the standards. 75% of the special education students performed at Level 3 or 4. In 2000-2001, the 56% within the disaggregated student group met the standard. In 2001-2002, 0% within the disaggregated student group met the standard and in 2002-2003, 0% of this group met the standard. 2003-2004 results show that 56% within this group met the standards. These results are due to the number of support classes that have been designed and implemented (i.e. Organizational Strategies and Math Strategies).

Information on the New York State assessment system can be found at [www.emsc.nysed.gov](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov).

#### **Part IV, #2 – Using Assessment Data**

The middle school uses assessment data to inform instruction and improve student instruction in a number of ways. Our teachers and building administrators rely on both formal and informal assessment instruments and strategies to measure prerequisite knowledge, individual student progress and achievement. The New York State Education Department provides all schools with an outstanding framework of standards and expectations upon which the middle school can build a program that are responsive to the particular needs of the Briarcliff community. Each year, teachers from all grades and departments review the State Assessment and Board of Regents testing results to analyze student performance and programmatic congruity. A specific item analysis is conducted and compared with statewide results on similar questions and with schools in our area that have similar demographics and expectations. This information is presented to the Board of Education and to the public via meetings, mailings and newsletters. The information is then used to target staff development and to make, at times, even minor adjustments to the curriculum and instructional practices. As a more informal means of improving student performance, teachers engage in pre-assessment of students at the beginning of the school year and before the start of new units of study. This pre-assessment strategy allows teachers to better differentiate their practice and respond to individual student needs in a more prescriptive fashion. Students who are identified as having difficulties are provided with additional support and interventional strategies outside of the classroom as well. As an affiliate of the Northern Westchester Board of Cooperative Educational Services, we also take advantage of power for student data warehousing. This enables the middle school to mine for important data, disaggregate students based on longitudinal and current performance and focus our directed energies on the numerous subgroups of high, low and average performers.

#### **Part IV, #3 – Communicating Student Performance**

Briarcliff Middle School goes to great length to communicate student performance with students, parents and the community at large. In addition to traditional grade and progress reporting, monthly school newsletters, district newsletters, individualized mailings, and formal assessment results are mailed to each student's parents with an accompanying letter of explanation. Assessment data and results across the curriculum are collected into a District Report Card and presented to the community annually at Board of Education meetings, mailed to parents, and are made available to all interested parties in the District Office and via a posting on the district's website. All grade levels utilize comprehensive team conferencing as well as *Back-To-School Night* and PTA sponsored *Coffee with the Principal* as means to communicate directly with parents. Individual student meetings and grade forums are used to set expectations and communicate effectively with students. There is a Compact for Learning Committee at the middle school and at the district level that provides an opportunity for parents to participate in decision making. Electronic surveys are conducted and all feedback is used to craft informed decisions and school policy. The middle school has also embraced technology as a communication tool. Teachers incorporate electronic grade books, e-mail, teacher-created websites and interactive discussion sites to both share and deliver information and timely evaluations. Our district website, created and maintained by Briarcliff students, is vital to the success of maintaining an open dialog with the members of our school community. Parents can take comfort in the ability to access information, news and forms twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.



#### **Part IV, #4 – Communicating Success**

The middle school uses many avenues to communicate student performance. The district is a founding member of the Tri-States Consortium. This is an organization of high performing school districts across the tri-state area of New York, Connecticut and New Jersey that endeavors to improve the educational programs and share best practices. The middle school has participated in a Tri-State assessment process to advance teaching and learning. Through the use of student performance data, the Tri-State's visiting team created a comprehensive report for systemic planning, assessment, accreditation and continuous improvement. There are three categories of systemic performance: student performance, internal support, and external support. The building principal has served as a team co-leader on visits to other school districts and is a member of an association of Westchester and Putman County middle school principals whose members make presentations, influence state-wide policy and discuss issues, trends and practices within their individual districts. The middle school faculty is active in a wide range of professional organizations across the county and state. Teachers, too, hold leadership positions, make presentations and engage in important conversations on a myriad of educational issues. The English and Social Studies departments are members of the New York State and Westchester Council of English Teacher and Social Studies Teachers respectively. Members of the Foreign Language department serve on the Westchester Association of Foreign Language Educators. The Music teachers are involved in the New York State Music Association (NYSSMA) as well as All-County and All-State Band, Orchestra and Chorus programs. Math Teachers are active participants in the Association of Math Teachers of New York State (AMTNYS). In addition to associations, teachers enable their students to take part in numerous national, state and local competitions such as The Young Writers Contest, Math Counts Competition, the Math Olympiad, Destination Imagination, Reader's Digest Word Power, All-State and All-County music competitions and others. Students achievement in these various competitions is reported in the school and district newsletters as well the local newspaper and television stations.

## **Part V – Curriculum and Instruction**

### **Part V #1 – School's Curriculum**

The Briarcliff Middle School educational program is comprehensive, challenging, purposeful, integrated, aligned with New York State Learning Standards, and responsive to needs of adolescents. The curriculum supports the development of young adolescents' intellectual, personal, physical and emotional well-being. Briarcliff Middle School provides rigorous curricula in Art, English Language Arts, World Language (French/Spanish/Latin), Health, Math, Music, Physical Education, Social Studies, Science, and Technology.

Each department ensures that all students are engaged in meaningful instruction through coordinated curriculum mapping that promotes vertical and horizontal articulation. Within each classroom, instructional methods such as open-ended questions, problem solving, differentiated activities, independent research, and technology deepen students' conceptual understanding.

The English Language Arts program consists of reading, writing, listening, and speaking for information and understanding, literary response and expression, critical analysis and evaluation, and social interaction. A wide variety of texts and genres are used to introduce students to the world of literature. Students are expected to revise written work in order to improve skills and comprehension. Students are encouraged to participate in school enrichment activities and local and regional contests, which further enhance communication skills.

The math curriculum is solidly grounded in the NCTM standards and the New York State Math Science Technology Standards. Mathematical concepts are explored through a variety of perspectives. In 6<sup>th</sup> grade, the transition begins from concrete to abstract thinking by extending arithmetic rules to algebraic processes; 7<sup>th</sup> grade students use algebra to model and solve real life problems and develop a richer understanding of the underlying structure of mathematics. By the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, students are routinely solving complex problems using abstract mathematics and communicating the results in writing. Classes are grouped homogeneously and honors courses are offered in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.

In science, students understand and apply scientific concepts, principles, and theories pertaining to the physical setting and living environment and recognize the historical development of ideas in science. This is accomplished through mathematical analysis, scientific inquiry, and engineering designs, as appropriate, to pose questions, seek answers, and develop solutions. Open enrollment to Earth Science in 8<sup>th</sup> grade provides an opportunity for all students with a love for science to accelerate and to earn a high school credit by taking the Regents.

The social studies program focuses on the essential learning skills required of successful students and future active participants in a democratic society. Teachers meet regularly to ensure a value-added component. The content in sixth grade offers a historical perspective of the origins of civilization and the development of cultures throughout the Eastern Hemisphere, followed by an in-depth look at the Middle Ages. Students study American history and culture, with an emphasis on diversity and our powerful world presence as a nation in the seventh and eighth grades.

The art curriculum covers traditional as well as computer art to implement the visual arts standards. Students create a collection of artworks, in a variety of mediums that reinforce basic elements and principles of art. Projects require students to use the elements and principles of art to communicate specific meaning. Technology is integrated and allows for an interactive format for reflection and critique of student work. Cultural aspects of the curriculum include interdisciplinary assignments that reflect historical periods and allow students an opportunity to demonstrate understanding of how artworks and artifacts reflect important aspects of a culture.

The World Language Department's philosophy is that all students can learn a foreign language. To develop the communication skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing, a variety of approaches are utilized, including language acquisition through Total Physical Response, storytelling, and differentiated instruction as well as the use of multiple intelligences. Cultural understanding is interwoven in daily lessons through the use of Internet and multimedia projects. Connections are made with other disciplines in the study of social studies, math, art, music, dance and literature. Comparisons are made with other languages while developing acceptance of differences among world communities.

## **Part V #2b – English Curriculum**

The English Department reflects the curriculum set for New York State middle schools. The grade 6 program provides a transition from elementary school to middle school. Grade 7 is a reinforcement and development of written and oral communication skills as well as an increase in depth of understanding on an inferential and critical level. Grade 8 is a preparatory course for high school and requires extensive writing and critical interpretation of a variety of texts while preparing for the New York State English Language Arts Test, administered in January.

The English Language Arts curriculum consists of reading, writing, listening, and speaking for information and understanding, literary response and expression, critical analysis and evaluation, and social interaction. Each grade level is a literature-based curriculum, studying a variety of prose and poetry, including essays, short stories, novels, and dramatic works. Literature involves the classics as well as contemporary and multicultural works. Appropriate reading material is based on grade level and skill level of the individual student. The goal is to individualize instruction as much as possible and take each student as far as his/her abilities allow.

Students in grades 6-8 experience both creative and formal writing as they learn the writing process as applied to poems, essays, stories, journals and research projects. Reading and writing, as well as isolation exercises, are used to increase and develop skills in comprehension, grammar, spelling and vocabulary. More sophisticated reading and writing is expected of students as they progress and prepare for high school. The emphasis is placed on students growing to a critical and analytical stage of expression, response, and self-evaluation.

Students who are identified as reading below grade level are provided with assistance in decoding and comprehension. Instruction is given based on the various levels of comprehension including literal and figurative strategies. This comes in the form of a Reading class. If more extensive help is required and the student qualifies for an IEP, he or she can enter Alternative English class which parallels the mainstream English curriculum and provides the appropriate classroom support.

## **Part V #3 – Other Curriculum Area**

Our schools' philosophy statement includes the words, "[our educational program] encourages students to contribute to the betterment of their world and to be contributing members of society." The Related Arts program helps us achieve this goal by fostering cognitive, emotional, and kinesthetic learning and preparing students to think critically and behave ethically as responsible citizens. Students have an opportunity to participate in Art, Computer Art, Music, Technology, Public Speaking, Public Presentation, Human Rights, and Community Service. In Human Rights and Community Service, students research problems both locally and globally, and then turn this knowledge into positive action. Recently, our students learned that students in El Salvador do not have books to read. The students used their math skills to estimate how much money they could raise in various fundraisers, and ultimately were able to purchase and send nearly two hundred picture books to El Salvador. In the second marking period, our students learned that there are orphans with AIDS in Namibia, Africa, who do not have organized activities or games to play after school and decided to create educational games to send to these children. In Human Rights, students choose a human rights topic of interest and research it to thoroughly define the problem and investigate what people and organizations are doing about the problem. The project also includes contacting the organization by telephone, sharing the research with a parent or other adult, and deciding what action to take to help the cause. Through these and other projects, students have authentic opportunities to apply knowledge and skills to enhance and effect positive change in the world.

#### **Part V #4 – Instructional Methods**

Responding to the needs of all learners is an essential tenet in the mission of Briarcliff Middle School. Teachers differentiate instruction and use research-based teaching strategies that are developmentally appropriate to support and build on the premise that learners differ in important ways. Teachers engage students in instruction through different learning modalities, appealing to students' interests. They design a variety of instructional strategies that align with the variables in students' learning styles, aptitude and readiness. Flexibility in time as well as student groupings within the classroom are used to support student needs and interests.

Other hallmarks of Briarcliff Middle School are the Collaborative Teaching Model, Socratic Seminar and Habits of Mind. In collaborative classes, two or more teachers deliver instruction to a group of students with diverse needs in which the teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to select and adapt curricula and instructional methods. Collaborative classes provide an opportunity to increase instructional options and to support students with learning disabilities in the general education curriculum. In addition, Briarcliff Middle School designed a program called CASSTLE (Collaborative Academic Social Skills in a Transitional Learning Environment) to support students who need not only a resource room but the additional support of a school psychologist.

Another way the school responds to the needs of all learners is through Socratic Seminars and the integration of Habits of Mind. Socratic Seminar is an instructional method used so students seek deeper understanding of complex ideas in a text. Rigorously thoughtful dialogue is incorporated, rather than memorizing information and the process includes questions that are opened ended, having no right or wrong answer. Habits of Mind are sixteen broad and enduring thinking dispositions that are employed by students when confronted with a problem or dilemma, the answer to which is not immediately apparent. Integrating Habits of Mind in instruction promotes a productive learning community and requires a discipline of the mind that is practiced so it becomes a habitual way of working toward more thoughtful, intelligent action.

#### **Part V #5 – Professional Development Program**

The Briarcliff School District has a comprehensive and effective professional development plan that includes a district-wide committee comprised of administrators, teachers and parent volunteers from all three schools, and a liaison from a local university. The focus of the Professional Development Committee is to provide meaningful staff development opportunities to improve the quality of teaching and learning as well as to ensure that teachers remain current with their profession and meet the learning needs of their students. In addition, Superintendent's Conference Days are planned by this committee and are aligned with district and school initiatives.

Teachers are required to fulfill fifteen professional hours outside of the school day. The superintendent and/or building principal determine seven and one half hours, leaving the remaining hours for teacher discretion, subject to principal's approval. In addition, the District encourages teachers to enroll in accredited graduate courses as well as in-service courses directly related to district, school initiatives as well as individual goals. Courses must be pre-approved by the building principal and the superintendent. Teachers complete a Course Approval Form that requires a rationale for taking the course, a description of how the course will impact student achievement and how the teacher will assess the impact of taking this course. A course description from the institution must be attached to the form. Upon successful completion of the coursework, appropriate credit is received.

Current district and school initiatives include brain research based on the work of Dr. Mel Levine's *All Kinds of Minds* Institute, differentiated instruction, curriculum mapping, Socratic Seminar, Smart Board and Blackboard training, technology integration, and Dr. Arthur Costa's, *Habits of Mind*.

**APPENDIX**  
**Briarcliff Middle School**  
**Briarcliff Manor Union Free School District**

**State Criterion Referenced Tests**  
**New York State 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**English Language Arts Assessment.**

<b>English Language Arts</b>	<b>2003-2004</b>	<b>2002-2003</b>	<b>2001-2002</b>	<b>2000-2001</b>	<b>1999-2000</b>
<b>Testing Month</b>	<b>1/14/2004</b>	<b>1/14/2003</b>	<b>3/1/2002</b>	<b>5/1/2001</b>	<b>5/16/2000</b>
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% At or Above Level 4- Students consistently demonstrate understanding of written and oral text beyond the literal level.	26%	30%	40%	31%	43%
% At or Above Level 3- Students demonstrate understanding of written and oral text beyond the literal level.	63%	58%	47%	55%	50%
% At or Above Level 2- Students demonstrate partial understanding of written and oral text.	12%	11%	13%	12%	7%
% At or Above Level 1- Students demonstrate minimal understanding of written and oral text.	0%	0%	1%	2%	0%
Number of students tested	106	104	111	97	96
Percent of total students tested	97%	99%	99%	98%	97%
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	.86%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>Students with Disabilities</b>					
% At or Above Level 4- Students consistently demonstrate understanding of written and oral text beyond the literal level.	0%	6%	0%	7%	11%
% At or Above Level 3- Students demonstrate understanding of written and oral text beyond the literal level.	56%	44%	41%	27%	78%
% At or Above Level 2- Students demonstrate partial understanding of written and oral text.	44%	50%	58%	55%	11%
% At or Above Level 1- Students demonstrate minimal understanding of written and oral text.	0%	0%	1%	11%	0%
Number of students tested	16	13	17	9	9
<b>STATE SCORES</b>					
% At or Above Level 4- Students consistently demonstrate understanding of written and oral text beyond the literal level.	*See below	8%	10%	11%	10%
% At or Above Level 3- Students demonstrate understanding of written and oral text beyond the literal level.		37%	34%	34%	35%
% At or Above Level 2- Students demonstrate partial understanding of written and oral text.		45%	49%	41%	42%
% At or Above Level 1- Students demonstrate minimal understanding of written and oral text.		9%	7%	14%	13%

\*As of February 4, 2005, the only information available from the State Education Department is that 47% of eighth graders scored at Level 3 and 4. Middle schools continued to reduce the number of students scoring at Level 1.

**APPENDIX**  
**Briarcliff Middle School**  
**Briarcliff Manor Union Free School District**

**State Criterion Referenced Tests**  
**New York State 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Math Assessment.**

<b>Math</b>	<b>2003-2204</b>	<b>2002-2003</b>	<b>2001-2002</b>	<b>2000-2001</b>	<b>1999-2000</b>
<b>Testing Month</b>	<b>5/12/2004</b>	<b>5/4/2003</b>	<b>5/1/2002</b>	<b>5/15/2001</b>	<b>5/18/2000</b>
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% At or Above Level 4- Students provide evidence of superior knowledge of key mathematical ideas.	48%	35%	49%	38%	40%
% At or Above Level 3- Students consistently use prime numbers, factors and multiples.	48%	54%	41%	53%	51%
% At or Above Level 2- Students for the most part use basic reasoning.	4%	10%	9%	9%	8%
% At or Above Level 1- Students may understand and use simple operations.	0%	1%	2%	0%	1%
Number of students tested	106	102	112	97	97
Percent of total students tested	100%	99%	100%	97%	100%
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>Students with Disabilities</b>					
% At or Above Level 4- Students provide evidence of superior knowledge of key mathematical ideas.	0%	0%	0%	6%	11%
% At or Above Level 3- Students consistently use prime numbers, factors and multiples.	75%	0%	0%	56%	44%
% At or Above Level 2- Students for the most part use basic reasoning.	25%	98%	92%	39%	33%
% At or Above Level 1- Students may understand and use simple operations.	0%	2%	8%	0%	11%
Number of students tested	16	13	17	18	9
<b>STATE SCORES</b>					
% At or Above Level 4- Students provide evidence of superior knowledge of key mathematical ideas.	*See below	9%	11%	11%	7%
% At or Above Level 3- Students consistently use prime numbers, factors and multiples.		42%	37%	37%	33%
% At or Above Level 2- Students for the most part use basic reasoning.		32%	33%	33%	35%
% At or Above Level 1- Students may understand and use simple operations.		17%	20%	26%	25%

\*As of February 4, 2005, the only information available from the State Education Department is that 57.7% of eighth graders scored at Level 3 and 4. The percentage of students scoring at Level 1 declined substantially.