

2003-2004 No Child Left Behind—Blue Ribbon Schools Program Cover Sheet

Name of Principal: Mrs. Gwendolyn Damiano
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name: George Bancroft Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address: 1002 Albright Avenue
Scranton, PA 18508-2506

Tel. (570) 348-3667 Fax (570) 348-3376

Website/URL: www.scrsd.org/ssd/Ourschools/Bancroft/Bancroft3a.shtm
E-mail: Bancroft@ssd.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. John R. Williams
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Scranton Tel. (570) 348-3465

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/Chairperson Mr. Todd J. O'Malley
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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 _____

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 2003-2004 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 1998.
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

All data are the most recent year available.

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

1. Number of schools in the district: 13 Elementary schools
 3 Middle schools
 2 High schools
 18 TOTAL

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: \$ 9,373.00

Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: \$ 8,295.00

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

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

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

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total				
K	15	13	28				
1	18	17	35				
2	18	15	33				
3	21	21	42				
4	23	17	40				
5	19	23	42				
TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL →							262*

* Bancroft Elementary provides Title I services to 24 preschool students three years of age and 18 preschool students four years of age, five days per week.

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the students in the school:
- | | |
|------------|--------------------------------|
| <u>60%</u> | White |
| <u>18%</u> | Black or African American |
| <u>21%</u> | Hispanic or Latino |
| <u>1%</u> | Asian/Pacific Islander |
| <u>0%</u> | American Indian/Alaskan Native |

100% Total

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 17%

(This rate includes the total number of students who transferred to or from different schools between October 1 and the end of the school year, divided by the total number of students in the school as of October 1, multiplied by 100.)

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	20
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	21
(3)	Subtotal of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	41
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1	247
(5)	Subtotal in row (3) divided by total in row (4)	.17
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	17%

8. Limited English Proficient students in the school: 15%
39 Total Number Limited English

Proficient
 Number of languages represented: 3
 Specify languages:

Spanish
 Portuguese
 Vietnamese

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 84.1%

185 Total Number Students Who Qualify

10. Students receiving special education services: 22.1%
58 Total Number of Students Served

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

<u>1</u> Autism	<u> </u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u> </u> Deafness	<u>12</u> Other Health Impaired
<u> </u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>14</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u> </u> Hearing Impairment	<u>8</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>23</u> Mental Retardation	<u> </u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u> </u> Multiple Disabilities	<u> </u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

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

	Number of Staff	
	<u>Full-time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>1</u>	<u> </u>
Classroom teachers	<u>12</u>	<u> </u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>8</u>	<u> </u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>5</u>	<u> </u>
Support staff	<u>5</u>	<u> </u>
Total number	<u>31</u>	<u> </u>

12. Average school student-“classroom teacher” ratio: 16:1
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.)

	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001	1999-2000	1998-1999
Daily student attendance	94.8%	93.8%	94.3%	92.8%	93.9%
Daily teacher attendance	NA	94.2%	93.2%	86.2%	92.2%
Teacher turnover rate	0%	1%	2%	1%	2%
Student dropout rate	---	---	---	---	---
Student drop-off rate	---	---	---	---	---

PART III- SUMMARY

Narrative Snapshot

George Bancroft Elementary School, built in 1928, is located in Scranton, Pennsylvania. It is one of 13 elementary schools in the Scranton School District and serves approximately 262 students in preschool through fifth grade.

Bancroft Elementary has the highest percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the Scranton School District. For several years in a row, the test scores indicated many students were performing at either basic or below basic levels. Many expressed the impossibility of raising test scores to meet the Adequate Yearly Progress, with the type of population served by the school. The faculty of Bancroft were not of the same opinion.

Imagine teachers and staff members believing in their school, students, and themselves, and refusing to allow mediocrity to infect their school. Furthermore, visualize the will of a dynamic group of individuals rising to the challenge and working together to devise a strategic plan to raise test scores. Finally, consider the type of role models these teachers represent to their students. The aforementioned as well as many other exciting changes have occurred throughout this past year, resulting in Bancroft Elementary doubling their reading scores and tripling their math scores on the Pennsylvania Systems of School Assessments.

Picture a brick building in the middle of a small neighborhood, surrounded only by blacktop. Now, visualize teachers and students planting butterfly and hummingbird gardens, shrubs and trees around the school. Upon entering the door, one's eyes are immediately attracted to a foyer with electric blue steps. On these steps, the children have painted, "Footsteps to Our Future," along with imprints of their feet. Once you cross the threshold into the main hallway, colorful little handprints border the middle of the walls. Every person is greeted by our mission statement hanging on the wall, which was hand-quilted by the students. Picture our children painting a "Garden of Polygons," the alphabet, numbers and sequences on the hallway walls. A math lesson on measuring, geometry, addition, and estimation, became the center of an art activity in which the students designed and painted tile for the lavatories. Imagine what it would be like to read in a library painted like the inside of a castle. Constant displays of hands-on, standard's-based activities create an atmosphere of pride and achievement.

We believe the strength of a school depends on parents, students, and staff working together to provide the best opportunities and support for all children. School sponsored programs for parents come alive with activities that promote reading and math skills.

George Bancroft Elementary School is a true testament that all children, regardless of cultural, ethnic or socioeconomic differences, can be guided toward achieving academic excellence. We will continue to provide all students with equal opportunities to engage in the best instructional practices that respond to the needs of the citizenry, while building upon the culturally diverse roots of our community.

PART IV- INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Description of School Assessment Results

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires each state to create challenging standards for reading and math. The Pennsylvania Academic Standards, adopted prior to the passage of this law, state what children should know and be able to do at specific grade levels. These standards are the foundation for each curriculum area.

In order to assess and monitor student achievement, the Department of Education further mandates that schools conduct annual assessments of these standards at various grade levels. Each spring, students throughout Pennsylvania in grades 3 and 5 are tested in both reading and math using a standardized instrument known as the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA).

Several months after the tests are administered, each school receives a report which compares its' reading and math scores with the scores of other schools in both the district and in the state of Pennsylvania. Descriptions of how the school performed on each standard are also provided. For instance in the standard 'Reading Critically in All Content Areas,' 73.3% of George Bancroft students achieved proficiency, whereas the state averaged 71.7%. According to these numbers, Bancroft scored higher than the state average. This method of describing how the students scored in each category allows us to identify our strengths and weaknesses.

The Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is a specified annual percentage of students who must meet or exceed proficiency on standardized tests. Depending upon how many questions the student answers correctly, he or she is placed into one of four categories: Advanced, Proficient, Basic, or Below Basic. Currently, 35% of the students taking the test must score proficient or advanced in math. In reading, 45% of the students must score proficient or advanced. At specific intervals, the goal increases, so that by the year 2014, all students will score at proficient levels.

During the 2001-2002 school year, 28% of the students at George Bancroft scored proficient or above in math and 32% scored proficient or above in reading. The scores clearly did not meet the adequate yearly progress mandate. According to the No Child Left Behind Act, schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress for two years are subject to consequences. We at Bancroft knew we had to address our weaknesses as identified on the assessments and make them our strengths.

After a year of hard work and sacrifice, we could hardly wait to see how our students had performed. The testing results for the 2003-2003 school year were reported in August of 2003. Not only did our school meet the AYP, we exceeded the requirements. A total of 69.3% of our students scored proficient or advanced in both math and reading.

Our mission is not over. Our student population is extremely diverse, which presents us with more challenges in the years to come.

Using Assessment Data to Understand and Improve Student Performance

The faculty at George Bancroft employs assessment data to understand and improve student and school performance in numerous ways. PSSA data from 2002 pointed to the need for a curriculum standards checklist for each grade level. These checklists allow each teacher to see individual student's strengths and weaknesses. They provide clear guidelines for additional instruction of the curriculum.

The 2002 assessment data also indicated a need for linking the PSSA to daily instruction. The faculty made this adjustment by employing more authentic texts, performance tasks, phonemic awareness activities, rubrics, directed and guided reading instruction, open-ended questions, thinking math activities and computer software. Furthermore, the school purchased *PSSA Coach Books* in reading and math for the primary level, grade 3, and grade 5 in order to allow students additional experience in taking the tests. These books also guide teachers' instruction according to the student's strengths and weaknesses.

It was apparent that the faculty needed to design appropriate differentiated instruction for all students. Subsequently, in-services were conducted on differentiated curriculum design. The faculty used the material from these in-services to reconstruct their daily lesson plans to ensure they correlate with the academic standards and that they had an appropriate means of assessment.

Communicating Performance and Assessment Data

The faculty and Bancroft communicates and records student performance in various forms:

- Report cards are distributed quarterly.
- Parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year to discuss specific strengths and needs.
- On a bi-weekly basis, each special education and ESL teacher issues monitoring forms to any classroom teacher who has students with special needs in their room. These are merely mini-assessments of how the student is progressing within an inclusive environment. Not only does this format keep the lines of communication open among the teachers, it is an effective way to establish anecdotal records. This type of documentation is effective when determining the Least Restrictive Environment at an IEP meeting. If a teacher notes on these forms that a particular child is not doing well either academically or behaviorally, a copy is made and sent home to the parents. Our student success rate has increased a significant amount due to this monitoring method.
- Many teachers keep portfolios on each child, and review the work with them weekly. Often, the students bring home folders containing samples of their work.
- Faculty and administration worked collaboratively to create progress reports to meet the specific needs of our school. Although these reports may be sent home at any time as needed throughout the school year, they are only required for those who do make advancements on the curriculum based assessments.

- The school sponsors parent and community meetings.
- Newsletters are sent to parents containing updates regarding the scores and our intentions as to how we will continue building upon our successes.

Sharing Success with Other Schools

The faculty and administration of Bancroft Elementary collaboratively developed a data driven school improvement plan. The teachers evaluated their teaching strategies and identified areas in which they needed to improve. The administration provided unlimited in-services within these areas. Our plan included measurable student achievement goals and an action plan for their implementation and evaluation. This improvement plan will be disseminated to all 13 district elementary schools.

All district principals meet every month to discuss progress and share strategies and activities that have been effective in promoting student growth. Many of our successful interventions have already been implemented in several other buildings.

Our district provides after hours professional development sessions for administrators. Recently, principals who experienced a significant rise in scores participated on a panel for other district administrators. Strategies were shared across all grade levels in the belief that school improvement is both a horizontal and a vertical process.

Several teachers have attended district-sponsored workshops where they promoted strategies for differentiating instruction and the changes we have made to our curriculum and learning environment.

PART V- CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Description of School Curriculum

George Bancroft Elementary School uses a balanced literacy approach to reading. Anthologies from a basal series, leveled books, and Kidwriting comprise the program, which is researched based with the report from the National Reading Panel as its foundation. Program elements include phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, text comprehension, and fluency.

A national trainer did staff development for the reading/language arts program. This individual has not only in-serviced the faculty, but also provided follow-up visits to ensure understanding and appropriate student progress on concepts of reading instruction. Students hear stories from an anthology, as teachers model pre-reading, during reading and after reading strategies. Guided reading is practiced daily as part of flexible grouping classroom management. Students can choose from a classroom library of books on their level. Spelling and vocabulary are thematically connected to the reading passages. Students learn Kidwriting as early as kindergarten, and grammar instruction develops through mini lessons based on error analysis. Reading assessment is done through a

series of measures including, but not limited to running records and miscue analysis.

The reading curriculum is Pennsylvania Standards-based, as is all instruction at Bancroft. A scope and sequenced, spiral curriculum reviews, and then expands on, concepts learning the previous year.

The mathematics curriculum is manipulative-based and includes instructional strategies from the American Federation of Teachers nationally accredited program, Thinking Math. Social studies instruction (history, geography, citizenship) includes reading strategies as its foundation.

The district is in the process of purchasing a new elementary science program that is aligned to the newly written elementary science curriculum. This program, which included science, technology, environment and ecology, is activity/lab based, where students are actively engaged in “doing” science.

Students receive health, physical education, computer instruction, music and art through weekly scheduled classes. Although not mandated by Chapter 4 of the Pennsylvania School Code, character education is interwoven in the curriculum at Bancroft. A new theme is introduced each month and students focus on that character trait for several weeks until it becomes part of the school culture.

Also not mandated, world languages have become a component of the Bancroft curriculum, since the school is fortunate to have many students who represent several countries. This diversity provides a rich forum of American-born students to lean not only the conversational languages, but also the cultures, of other lands.

Description of Reading Curriculum and Why it was Chosen

Our current Basal Reading Series called *Signatures* is published by Harcourt School Publishers. A committee of teachers including Reading Specialists, Special Education teachers, and Administrators adopted it. This selection practice has been quite successful when choosing curriculum-based materials.

Philosophically, the Scranton School District embraces a balanced literacy approach. It emphasizes the importance of combining research-based skills and strategies with outstanding children’s literature. Our district’s focuses on the following individual principals of reading instruction as fundamental guides:

- Reading and writing are interrelated and interactive language processes and literacy instruction should capitalize on this relationship;
- Literacy instruction should lead children to understand that reading is a meaningful, active, and strategic process;
- The key to successful literacy instruction is the teacher;
- Teachers must recognize the enormous diversity that exists among students, plan appropriate instruction for a wide range of individual differences in the classroom,

and believe that all students can and will be successful in learning to read.

In the Scranton School District, we define reading as the active process of constructing meaning from the written text in relation to the experiences and knowledge of the reader. The true reading process is dynamic and requires active, meaningful communication between the text and the reader.

Description of Science Curriculum and how it Pertains to Mission Statement

The main objective of our science curriculum is to enhance critical thinking skills and to stimulate the students' natural curiosity about themselves and their environment. We believe students should understand how science affects their everyday lives, and how it can be useful beyond the classroom.

Our science curriculum is divided into in three areas: content, process and product. The Pennsylvania Science Standards for each grade level guides content selection. Instruction of the content is a cooperative effort of the teaching team, which consists of both a regular education teacher as well as a special education teacher. Teachers collaborate on student activities and design innovative units, which integrate other content areas such as math and reading. Lessons focus on interdisciplinary skills such as sequencing, interpreting data, writing and graphing. Students demonstrate problem solving skills by exploring ideas, posing problems and working toward solutions. Teachers also incorporate various leaning approaches that meet the needs of diverse learners.

Finally, the teachers decide how the students will produce the final product, as well as the means of assessment for these products. The team uses a choice of the following products: an adapted test for special needs students, a project that incorporates what was taught and that meets the criteria of the project rubric, or an oral presentation which also must meet the criteria of the oral presentation rubric.

Instructional Methods Used to Improve Student Performance

Upon perusing the physical plant and playground at Bancroft, one cannot fail to notice that authentic learning and assessment play an integral role in the day-to-day education process. Students learn and apply various skills and knowledge as they plan and participate in planting gardens, decorating halls and classrooms and quilting the mission statement.

Teachers combine a variety of methods as they differentiate instruction to meet the needs of Bancroft's diverse learners. Experiential lessons provide motivation and background knowledge that we know is essential to student leaning. Direct instruction provides basic skills while guided and independent practice encourages that modicum of automaticity necessary for success in academic endeavors. Students work both independently and cooperatively on projects that demand application of problem solving and higher order thinking.

Teachers employ a variety of auditory, visual, kinesthetic, and tactile strategies to address

the preferred learning modalities of individual students. They include graphic organizers, role play, oral and visual presentations, questioning, lecture, hands-on experimentation followed by de-briefing, reciprocal teaching, use of audiovisual equipment, and field trips.

Professional Development Program and its Impact on Student Achievement

In September of 2002, the teachers at George Bancroft displayed a unique initiative to improve the overall student performance. All members of the faculty assisted in the creation of an intensive strategic plan for staff development. The faculty formed weekly study groups to identify data-based goals for school reform and to pursue research based methods for goal achievement and assessment based on specific state standards. Among completed projects are grade specific checklists in reading, language and math aligned to PA Educational Standards. The groups continue to meet weekly with additional professional support and guidance.

In workshop format, the faculty was presented with multiple Educational Research and Development programs in topics. Some of the sessions addressed the following: direct instruction, classroom management, family involvement, peer learning strategies, and comprehension strategies in reading and math. In addition, the faculty and staff participated in workshops on differentiated instruction, ESL practices for classroom teachers, SRA practices, computer enhanced learning, reading strategies, phonemic awareness, curriculum based assessment, Kid Writing, running records, standards-based learning and accommodations for students with disabilities. Sessions on inclusion of special needs students provided opportunities for teacher observations in other school districts.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Table 1
Pennsylvania School System of School Assessment
Reading, Math, and Writing
Revised editions yearly
Published by the Pennsylvania Department of Education

PSSA Math Results Grade 5 (Scaled Scores)	April 2001	April 2002	April 2003
Total School Score- Math	1120	1140	1342
At or Above Basic	27%	45%	84.7%
At or Above Proficient	4%	24%	69.3%
At Advanced	0%	3%	38.5%
<i>Number Tested</i>	26	34	21***
<i>Percent Tested</i>	96.3%	100%	100%
<i>Number Excluded</i>	9	0	0
<i>Percent Excluded</i>	25.7%	0%	0%
Subgroup Scores			
<i>Economically Disadvantaged</i>			
At or Above Basic	*	44%	90%
At or Above Proficient	*	24%	60%
At or Above Advanced	*	4%	30%
Number Tested	0**	25	7*
State Mean Score	1310	1320	1340
At or Above Basic	79%	75%	77.3%
At or Above Proficient	54%	53%	56.3%
At Advanced	23%	26%	27.7%

*** In order to protect student confidentiality, the state of Pennsylvania does not indicate the scores on the school report if fewer than 10 students were tested in that category. In order to provide a basis of comparison, research has been conducted strictly for this application. Individual student information has not been compromised and remains confidential.**

**** The percent of Economically Disadvantaged students at Bancroft during the 2000-2001 school year was at 87%. Upon reviewing the data for this year, an error was found in the school report. According to the report, 0% of 25 students were classified as Economically Disadvantaged. This is an obvious recording error. If necessary, the correct figures can be obtained by researching the district archives.**

***** In the state of Pennsylvania, students who are identified as being severely low functioning, are administered an alternate assessment. This assessment is called the Pennsylvania Alternate State Assessment (PASA). A total of two students from the 5th grade class took the PASA in the spring of 2003.**

Table 2
Pennsylvania School System of School Assessment
Reading, Math, and Writing
Revised editions yearly
Published by the Pennsylvania Department of Education

PSSA Reading Results Grade 5 (Scaled Scores)	April 2001	April 2002	April 2003
School Scores	1160	1200	1317
At or Above Basic	48%	56%	92.4%
At or Above Proficient	16%	35%	69.3%
At Advanced	0%	6%	30.8%
<i>Number Tested</i>	25	34	21***
<i>Percent Tested</i>	92.6%	100%	100%
<i>Number Excluded</i>	8	0	0
<i>Percent Excluded</i>	24.2%	0%	0%
Subgroup Scores			
<i>Economically Disadvantaged</i>			
At or Above Basic	*	52%	80%
At or Above Proficient	*	44%	50%
At or Above Advanced	*	8%	20%
Number Tested	0**	25	7*
State Mean Score	1310	1320	1330
At or Above Basic	80%	80%	78.4%
At or Above Proficient	56%	57%	58%
At Advanced	20%	18%	27.1%

*** In order to protect student confidentiality, the state of Pennsylvania does not indicate the scores on the school report if fewer than 10 students were tested in that category. In order to provide a basis of comparison, research has been conducted for the 2002-2003 school year strictly for this application. Individual student information has not been compromised and remains confidential.**

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