2005-2006 No Child Left Behind - Blue Ribbon Schools Program

U.S. Department of Education

Cover Sheet   Type of School: (Check all that apply) __ Elementary X Middle __ High __ K-12 __Charter

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

Official School Name ___Thomas W. Pyle Middle School_____
                        (As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address___6311 Wilson Lane_____
                         (If address is P.O. Box, also include street address)

__Bethesda_____Maryland_____20817-5533_____
City   State   Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County ___Montgomery_____State School Code Number*_____0428_____

Telephone (301) 320-6540_____Fax (301) 320-6647_____

Website/URL___http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/schools/pylems/   E-mail Michael_J_Zarchin@mcpsmd.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.

_____ Date_____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*___Dr. Jerry D. Weast_____
                          (Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name: Montgomery County Public Schools_____ Tel. (301) 279-3381_____

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.

_____ Date_____
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Dr. Charles Haughey_____
                        (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.

_____ Date_____
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

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

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 for 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 2005-2006 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 2000 and has not received the 2003, 2004, or 2005 *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

All data are the most recent year available.

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

1. Number of schools in the district: _125_ Elementary schools
                                          __38_ Middle schools
                                          ___0_ Junior high schools
                                          __24_ High schools
                                          ___7_ Other

                                          _194_ TOTAL

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: __$10,974.00__

    Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: __$9,062.00___

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
    [x]   Suburban
    [   ]   Small city or town in a rural area
    [   ]   Rural

4. __1____ Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.

    __1____ 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	237	187	424
K					8	256	223	479
1					9			
2					10			
3					11			
4					12			
5					Other			
6	208	198	406					
					TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL →			1,309

3

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

6. Racial/ethnic composition of   __78__% White
    the students in the school: ___3__% Black or African American
                                          ___7__% Hispanic or Latino
                                          __12__% 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: ___5_%

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

(1)	Number of students who transferred **to** the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	39
(2)	Number of students who transferred **from** the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	30
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	69
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1	1283
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0 .0537
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

8. Limited English Proficient students in the school: __3_%
                                         _41____Total Number Limited English Proficient
    Number of languages represented: ___16___
    Specify languages: Albanian, Arabic, Dutch, French, German, Hungarian, Indoesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandaran, Polish, Portuguese, Serbian, Spanish, and Thai
9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: ___6____%

    Total number students who qualify: __73_____

    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: _____9%
                                                    ____119_Total Number of Students Served

    Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the
    Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

    __6_Autism   ____Orthopedic Impairment
    __2_Deafness   _31_Other Health Impaired
    ____Deaf-Blindness   _48_Specific Learning Disability
    _12_Emotional Disturbance   _17_Speech or Language Impairment
    __1_Hearing Impairment   ____Traumatic Brain Injury
    ____Mental Retardation   __1_Visual Impairment Including Blindness
    __1_Multiple Disabilities

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

                              Number of Staff

                         Full-time   **Part-Time**

    Administrator(s)   4   0
    Classroom teachers   74   6

    Special resource teachers/specialists   5   0

    Paraprofessionals   1   7
    Support staff   15   11

    Total number   99   24

12. Average school student-"classroom teacher" ratio, that is, the number of
    students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers: 18:1

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.

	2004-2005	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001
Daily student attendance	97%	96%	96%	96%	95%
Daily teacher attendance	96%	94%	94%	N/A	N/A
Teacher turnover rate	18%	13%	10%	18%	N/A
Student dropout rate (middle/high)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Student drop-off rate (high school)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

N/A: Data not available

PART III - SUMMARY

Thomas W. Pyle Middle School (Pyle), the largest middle school in Montgomery County, is located three miles outside Washington, D.C. Our families represent a variety of backgrounds, professions, and nationalities. While over 1,300 children attend Pyle, the climate here makes each student, staff member and parent feel that he/she is an integral part of our community of learning.

This community extends beyond school walls to the cluster of six elementary schools and one high school serving our suburban neighborhoods. More than a way station between elementary and high school, Pyle is a place where students experience academic and personal growth. As a community, we all agree on a set of core values – demonstrating a passion for learning, encouraging academic and personal growth, sustaining a nurturing and respectful environment, and honoring diversity. Thus, staff members model a passion for learning and create a nurturing environment where individual talents and backgrounds are valued and respected, all for the purpose of helping students achieve their academic and personal potential.

What brings our school down to size and promotes an interdisciplinary approach to learning is Pyle's team structure. Consisting of 125 students and teachers from all major subject areas, each team is a school within a school. This setting permits a level of familiarity between students and educators that would not otherwise be possible. As a result, teachers share concerns about specific students and develop strategies that can be used consistently to benefit the child. Additionally, teachers craft assignments, events and activities that incorporate several subject areas under one overarching theme. Each team works closely with a single guidance counselor to insure that student needs are met. Teams meet weekly to discuss matters concerning individual students and issues of broader team interest.

Pyle's counselors work in partnership with parents to address the personal growth and character development of the whole child. The Guidance Advisory Committee (GAC) serves as an avenue of constructive communication and support. The GAC strengthens the student-family-school relationship through monthly meetings, and student and parent workshops. The GAC organizes programs on bullying prevention, study skills, and career options, among others.

Part of Pyle's whole-child approach includes exposure to the arts and athletics. Trophies line the walls of our choral and band rooms, and hundreds of students audition each year for ensembles and productions. Pyle's intramural soccer, basketball and softball teams fare well.

To encourage investment in our school by all students, Pyle staff and the PTSA jointly administer an after-school activities program (ASA), with roughly 50 offerings three afternoons each week. From track to cooking to robotics, these programs encourage students to explore new areas of interest and uncover skills. Many activities are taught by Pyle staff and parents, allowing students and adults to build rapport in a relaxed setting.

Our proximity to the nation's capital accounts for Pyle's unique community. Our student body reflects myriad countries and cultures. Pyle has many ways to ensure that all students are welcomed while still celebrating our cultural differences. The ESOL staff, students and their families host an International Night in partnership with the PTSA. The PTSA's Newcomers Committee infuses monthly social activities with an educational component, bringing together new and veteran Pyle parents, administrators and counselors. The GAC-PTSA Buddy Program matches each new family with a host family to help orient them to the school and the broader community.

Students involve themselves in that broader community through the Student Government Association (SGA). Several times a year, the SGA raises funds for local charities and encourages student participation in community events. The SGA also hosts dances and Spirit Week.

While events of recent years have called into question the ability of large secondary schools to meet the needs of its students, Pyle's approach demonstrates how a combination of strong leadership, passionate educators, involved parents, and engaged students can ensure success for every child.

PART IV – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Assessment Results:

Pyle Middle School utilizes multiple assessments to analyze potential areas where improvements can be made in teaching and learning. These assessments include: the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test-Fourth Edition (SDRT-4), Measures of Academic Progress-Reading (MAP-R), semester and final exams, end of unit assessments, and formative assessments throughout the year. These assessments not only give us valuable information on students' progress that allow us to apply various interventions to help students be more successful, many of these assessments have strong correlations with the Maryland School Assessments (MSAs) and can, therefore, be used to predict students performance on these tests.

The MSAs, which measure individual student proficiency in reading and math, were originally only administered to eighth-grade students beginning in March of 2003. In 2004, they were administered to students in grades 6 through 8 and are currently administered in grades 6 though 8 each year. Student scores are reported as Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. The state of Maryland establishes an Annual Measurable Objective (AMO), which is an annual target for the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency on the MSA. Each year the AMO is raised, pointing toward the ultimate goal of *No Child Left Behind*, to have 100% of students demonstrating proficiency by 2014. Schools achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP) by having all students and subgroups of students achieve the Annual Measurable Objective.

Pyle Middle School students have consistently demonstrated high performance on the MSA assessments. The AYP data this year for Pyle combined grades 6 though 8, which is different than in previous years where the eighth grade results were the determinate of a school's overall performance. Still, all students and subgroups of students continued to make significant gains in reading and math from 2004 to 2005. In reading, the percentage of students scoring in the basic category diminished significantly -- a 31% decrease in eighth grade, a 6% decrease in seventh grade, and a 52% decrease in sixth grade. Many subgroups demonstrated similar gains, including African American students (+10% from 71 to 82), Hispanic students (+17% from 71 to 88), Special Education students (+20% from 55 to 75) and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students (+19% from 60 to 79). Students demonstrated even greater gains in mathematics in all grade levels. The percentage of students scoring in the basic category diminished significantly -- a 20% decrease in eighth grade, a 23% decrease in seventh grade, and a 50% decrease in sixth grade. All grade levels showed an increase in students moving into the advanced level of mathematics including a 4% increase in eighth grade, a 13% increase in seventh grade, and an 19% increase in sixth grade. All subgroups demonstrated similar gains, including Hispanic students (+18% from 64 to 82), students who qualified for free and reduced meals (FARMS) (+16% from 29 to 45), and Special Education students (+25% from 37 to 62). The data indicates that we are meeting the needs of all students at Pyle, limiting students in the basic category and extended students into the advanced category. For further information on the MSA test, or to examine Pyle's data in more detail, visit www.mdk12.org.

These results reinforce for Pyle staff, students, and parents the commitment we all have to learning, the belief we have that all students can learn, and the goal we all embrace to challenge students to set and achieve high expectations for themselves. "Together, we are building on excellence."

Using Assessment Results:

At Pyle Middle School, countywide and school assessment data are collected in order to improve student achievement. Various sources of data are examined, including the Maryland State Assessment scores, MCPS assessments, and local school assessments. The school leadership team, instructional teams, departments, and PTA members examine the assessment results to determine the strengths and areas of improvement for student achievement. Then, interventions are designed to meet the needs of individual students. The interventions for students who scored basic on the reading portion of the MSA include small-group reading instruction delivered by the reading specialist, implementation of the Corrective Reading program, use of the computerized skills tutor program integrated into the classroom, and the reading after school intervention program. The interventions for students who scored basic on the

math portion of the MSA include use of the computerized skills tutor program integrated into the classroom and the Math after school intervention program.

Teachers at Pyle Middle School believe that when we examine student work, the data can be used to improve student performance. Thus, instructional teams select students who have scored on the border of moving from basic to proficient or from proficient to advanced on the MSA. Each subject area teacher brings work from the student and shares the work with the other teachers on the instructional team. The team creates an action plan that identifies strength and areas of needs for the student. This action plan is monitored throughout the school year. The Reading and English department collects Brief Constructed Response (BCR) writing samples each marking period. These data are examined to determine patterns through each marking period. The Math department tracks unit assessment data. These data are separated by topic to determine areas of need. All of these approaches help us help students maximize their potential and continue to achieve to the highest levels of their capacity.

Communicating Assessment Results:

At Pyle, we believe that only by partnering with our parents and students can we hope to continue to help our students achieve at such high levels. Therefore, we use several communication tools to inform and empower our teachers, students, and parents. One communication tool targeted at students and teachers is our weekly Panther TV program which is used to highlight school goals, the academic curriculum, social issues and student performance. Additionally, we have a shared folder warehoused on our computer server that contains common documents as well as a database that holds important student data such as test scores, interventions, and grades. This folder and database can be accessed by any teacher in the building and serves as a powerful means of sharing not only assessment results but of providing information that can guide teams of teachers as they strategize interventions on behalf of under-performing students.

Individual county and state student test results are sent home with students. Teachers explain these results to students and we also send home a sheet that explains to families how to interpret the results. We also have other communication tools for the entire Pyle community. These include Basmati, the *Pyle Phyle*, the school and county webpage, and community meetings. Basmati is a web-based computer program that is used to post student progress reports. Basmati can be checked by students and parents to keep track of their progress throughout the marking period. The *Pyle Phyle* is a monthly newsletter that is mailed to students and parents. The Pyle webpage as well as the MCPS webpage have links to the "Schools at a Glance" information sheet. It contains state assessment results and other student performance data and can be accessed by students, parents, and other members of the community. Additionally, we host monthly PTSA meetings, parent coffees, and several night meetings each year to share assessment data and to explain what these data mean. We also use these meetings to share effective study strategies with students and parents, discuss various intervention strategies, explain the impact these assessments have on articulation and placement decisions, and, most important, as a means to foster a dialogue between home and school about how we can continue to "Build on Excellence" by implementing strategies that will help students continue to achieve at high levels.

Sharing Success:

At Thomas W. Pyle we believe strongly in developing a professional learning community within our own school and among schools throughout Montgomery County and the state of Maryland. We have been very willing to share best practices with other schools. We have hosted instructional visits from several area middle schools as well as visited other middle schools interested in our strategies for helping our students consistently achieve at high levels. We have collaborated effectively with our six feeder elementary schools and Whitman High School. Our feeder elementary school teachers have observed classes and participated in discussions about the math curriculum and articulation procedures. Our feeder high school teachers have collaborated with our eighth grade teachers to discuss articulation, placement issues and curricular expectations.

Many members of the Pyle community have made presentations at the county level or serve on

committees that work to improve student achievement. For instance, our principal serves on several county committees devoted to middle school reform. Our assistant principals also participate in several county committees devoted to middle school reform, gifted and talented education, and grading and reporting. They also both regularly present the effective strategies used at Pyle at national conferences such as the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, The College Board Equity Colloquium, the Maryland Instructional Computers Coordinators Association (a technology conference), as well as countywide meetings and trainings. Several teachers have submitted proposals to the National Middle School Association and a number of Pyle staff members have served as MCPS trainers and have shared best practices at MCPS professional development sessions.

PART V – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Curriculum:

The motto at Pyle Middle School is "Building on Excellence." This theme extends to the manner in which we implement the Montgomery County Public Schools' (MCPS) curriculum which is aligned to the Maryland State Content Standards. In order to provide a rigorous and challenging instructional program that is matched to students' needs, we build upon the excellence of the MCPS curriculum by critically applying four essential questions to our instructional approach: 1) What do students need to know and be able to do? 2) How will we know that they have learned it? 3) What will we do when they haven't learned it? 4) What will we do when they already know it?

Students receive daily instruction in language arts, math, world studies, science, physical education, technology, music and art. Students also have the option of taking foreign language classes in Spanish, French, Japanese, and Italian.

In English, we emphasize developing literacy skills using both fiction and expository texts. Each year, students build their skills through reading several novels and one Shakespearean play, and writing a variety of research papers, poems, short stories, and text analyses, as well as engaging in literature circles, class discussions, and debates. Teachers enrich the curriculum through a partnership with the Shakespeare theater which offers a variety of workshops to students each year.

The social studies curriculum begins broadly by focusing on ancient world cultures and then narrows to US history up to the Civil War. Heterogeneous groups of students engage in a wide range of activities such as reading, writing, simulations, and class discussions to examine not only cultures but how various factors influence the rise and fall of civilizations and governments.

One way that we enrich the MCPS curriculum is through our humanities program focused on integrated lessons between world studies and language arts. Teachers connect the novels students read in English with the historical periods studied in world studies. Capstone activities include a Greco-Roman festival and a Renaissance festival.

Our math curriculum provides students a rigorous investigation into mathematical concepts. Students progress through Math A, B, and C which provide a foundation in number theory, fractions, decimals, statistics, and problem solving that foster mathematical thinking. From there, students advance to algebra and honors geometry for which they receive high school credit.

The goal of our science curriculum is to build upon students' natural curiosity by developing scientific thinking and skills using the scientific method. Students are heterogeneously grouped to engage in setting hypotheses, experimentation, and drawing conclusions that enable them to better understand their physical world. Unit themes include biology, chemistry, the solar system, and physical science. Teachers enrich the curriculum with units developed by NIH and the National Science Foundation that feature such activities as DNA extraction.

Pyle's foreign language program offers students an opportunity to earn high school credit in Spanish, French, Italian, or Japanese. These courses not only focus on developing verbal proficiency in these languages, they offer students a chance to become literate in the language and the culture.

Our art curriculum's goal is to expose students to a variety of forms of artistic expression. In grade six, students take an arts rotation which surveys a range of our art classes. In grades seven and

eight, students engage in more intensive study of such offerings as studio art, computer art, photojournalism, television studio, web design, and the domestic arts such as cooking and fashion design. Students also have the option of taking intensive music study through our world-class orchestra, band, jazz band, or chorus classes.

All students are required to take physical education and one quarter of health. The emphasis of these courses is on developing fitness through exposure to a wide range of physical activity and developing a healthy lifestyle by embracing healthy choices and avoiding risky behavior.

(Secondary Schools) English:

At Pyle Middle School, we implement the MCPS Reading/Language Arts Curriculum which is research-based and aligned with the Maryland State Content Standards. The overall goal is to develop independent readers who are able to construct meaning from a wide variety of texts and for a wide variety of reading purposes through a balanced literacy approach. Incoming sixth grade students are grouped according to their reading ability. Students reading above grade level are placed in GT reading where they receive reading instruction in challenging expository texts as well as enrichment activities. On-level readers receive more intensive instruction in independent reading strategies targeting their individual areas of weakness. Students reading below grade level are placed in smaller classes where the emphasis is on increasing reading comprehension of expository texts through word study, modeled reading, guided reading, and independent reading. In grades seven and eight, reading instruction is integrated into the English language arts curriculum with an emphasis on building upon the reading strategies taught in grade six to unlock meaning in challenging fictional texts. Reading strategies focus on before, during, and after reading strategies. Struggling readers in these grades are enrolled in a reading class that focuses on individual student needs as identified by both county and standardized assessments. Instruction emphasizes reading strategies and text structures with the goal of helping students read on or above grade level. Struggling readers also meet with the reading specialist in a pull out model for targeted interventions using the Student Outcomes and Achievement Report (SOAR) for Success program or the Corrective Reading program. Students who are on the cusp of moving from one reading level to the next receive further support during the day by meeting three times a week and working on a computerized tutorial program that is designed to improve students' reading comprehension. We also believe that reading instruction should be integrated into every subject area; therefore all departments implement reading instruction as part of their curricula. To support this approach, all students are tested quarterly using the MAP-R test to track student progress. Because this program is computer-based, all teachers receive results within 24-hours and are able to identify students who are not making progress and adjust their instruction accordingly.

Mathematics:

The mathematics curriculum at Pyle Middle School is based on the Montgomery County curriculum which builds upon and extends the Maryland state standards. Students have a variety of options for math based on their ability and readiness for the subject matter. Typically, students start in Math A, where they begin with data analysis, statistics, and probability and then move to fractions, decimals and per cent. They are then introduced to algebraic and geometric concepts. In Math B, students move to data analysis and proportions and then build upon their geometric and algebraic foundation by looking at relationships and measurement. In Math C, students study statistics and probability, rational numbers and proportions, and then move to algebraic functions and geometric measurement. Once students have mastered these basic concepts, students have the option of taking algebra for high school credit. After they successfully complete algebra, students move to honors geometry. Although our math curriculum is rigorous, teachers still apply flexible grouping and provide students with several pathways to reach their goals. For instance, a student may begin grade six in Math A, and, after demonstrating mastery over those concepts and excelling in Math B, may skip Math C and move directly into Algebra. By being flexible and offering multiple pathways in math, we are able to meet the diverse needs of our students by providing individual programs of study matched to a student's

ability and readiness level.

Instructional Methods:

At Pyle Middle school, teachers use student data to inform instruction. Teachers rely on both state and county test data as well as ongoing assessment (formative and summative) to plan instruction, to ensure that students are mastering the material, and to more effectively match instructional strategies to the students' learning needs. Based on student data, teachers modify grouping practices, target students for outside intervention, and modify instructional materials and practices to better meet student needs. Teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators meet weekly in interdisciplinary teams to examine student data (which is housed on a school-wide database), plan an interdisciplinary approach to address student needs, and modify instructional practices or materials, all with the goal of maximizing each student's potential. Because our school uses a block schedule, the 90-minute periods allow for a wider range of instructional strategies that foster a more in-depth examination of the subject matter. In both ability-grouped and heterogeneous classes, teachers differentiate their instruction by content, process, product, and setting to allow for flexible grouping as well as create a learning environment that is safe, respectful, and productive.

Most of our teachers have been exposed to the instructional approach advocated by Jon Saphier and Robert Gower in their work *The Skillful Teacher: Building your teaching skills* (1997: Research for Better Teaching). Teachers begin each lesson by reviewing the day's learning objective and agenda. Then teachers use warm-ups or review the homework in order to activate students' prior knowledge and prime them for the day's lesson. Teachers use such methods as lecture, small or large group activities, simulations, class discussions, guest lecturers, and multimedia presentations to help students reach the mastery objective. At the end of the class period, teachers use summarizing activities to help students process the day's learnings. Students who demonstrate mastery of the material can move on to enrichment activities, while those who do not demonstrate mastery engage in reteaching or other corrective action both during the class period and the Teacher Advisory Group (TAG) period. This corrective action allows them to re-engage with the content, and then retest to confirm mastery. By providing students multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery, teachers are more able to address various learning styles and levels of readiness as well as ensure that all students are learning.

Professional Development:

One of our core values is a commitment to life-long learning. We believe that as professionals, we should always be growing and expanding our capacity to serve students. To this end, we take a three-pronged approach to professional development. The first involves job-imbedded staff development led by our full-time staff development teacher. He works with teachers one-on-one providing such support as classroom observation and feedback, and meets with teachers outside the classroom to provide specific coaching on a variety of teacher needs. He also organizes school-wide training by grade level once per month during the school day on such topics as looking at student work and differentiation, as well as organizing internal walk-throughs where teachers visit other classrooms and then reflect on their observations. Additionally, other specialists in the school such as department heads, the reading specialist, and the Gifted and Talented Coordinator provide training during department meetings and informally with individual or small groups of teachers as needed. Second, teachers develop individual professional growth plans that are tied to the school's improvement plan and reflect the school's core values. Teachers then support each other toward achieving their individual and collective goals by meeting in their professional learning communities twice monthly in subject-alike groups to plan together, and provide each other with feedback on their work. Teachers also meet individually with administrators several times during their professional growth cycle to review their progress towards their goals and engage in reflective conversations about their professional growth and development. Finally, teachers have the option of engaging in staff development outside the school day such as visits to the Baldrige Academy, summer core training, The Skillful Teacher training, and training in a variety of technology tools such as assistive technology software, United Streaming, and Basmati, here at the school. The

Leadership team also attends training during the summer. The cumulative effect of these staff development efforts is a continual increase in the instructional capacity of the staff as well as the development of a professional learning community and culture, both of which research has shown have a direct impact on increasing student achievement.

Maryland School Assessment Results – Reading Grade 6
Thomas W. Pyle Middle School 2002-2005
Testing Month: March

	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
GRADE 6 SCORES	Grade Not Tested		
% At Basic		6	3
% At or Above Proficient		17	29
% At Advanced		75	68
Number of Students Tested		442	404
Number of Students Excluded		0	0
Percent of Students Excluded		0	0
Asian American (Number Tested)		49	40
% At Basic		6	5
% At or Above Proficient		94	95
% At Advanced		82	65
African American (Number Tested)		16	*
% At Basic		19	*
% At or Above Proficient		81	*
% At Advanced		44	*
White (Number Tested)		353	337
% At Basic		6	2
% At or Above Proficient		94	98
% At Advanced		76	70
Hispanic (Number Tested)		25	18
% At Basic		8	17
% At or Above Proficient		92	83
% At Advanced		67	56
Free and Reduced Meals (Number Tested)		*	*
Special Education (Number Tested)		43	36
% At Basic		30	19
% At or Above Proficient		70	81
% At Advanced		35	31
Limited English Proficient		16	*
% At Basic		19	*
% At or Above Proficient		81	*
% At Advanced		19	*

*Less than 10 students tested

Maryland School Assessment Results – Math Grade 6
Thomas W. Pyle Middle School 2002-2005
Testing Month: March

	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
GRADE 6 SCORES			
% At Basic		13	7
% At or Above Proficient		87	93
% At Advanced		42	50
Number of Students Tested		443	404
Number of Students Excluded		0	0
Percent of Students Excluded		0	0
Asian American (Number Tested)		49	40
% At Basic		6	8
% At or Above Proficient		94	93
% At Advanced		65	82
African American (Number Tested)		16	*
% At Basic		38	*
% At or Above Proficient		63	*
% At Advanced		44	*
White (Number Tested)		353	337
% At Basic		12	5
% At or Above Proficient		88	95
% At Advanced		76	70
Hispanic (Number Tested)		25	18
% At Basic		32	17
% At or Above Proficient		68	83
% At Advanced		67	56
Free and Reduced Meals (Number Tested)		*	*
Special Education (Number Tested)		43	36
% At Basic		51	36
% At or Above Proficient		49	64
% At Advanced		7	17
Limited English Proficient		19	*
% At Basic		47	*
% At or Above Proficient		53	*
% At Advanced		26	*

- Less than 10 students tested

Maryland School Assessment Results – Reading Grade 7
Thomas W. Pyle Middle School 2002-2005
Testing Month: March

	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
GRADE 7 SCORES	Students not tested		
% At Basic		5	4
% At or Above Proficient		20	22
% At Advanced		76	74
Number of Students Tested		385	453
Number of Students Excluded		0	0
Percent of Students Excluded		0	0
Asian American (Number Tested)		46	53
% At Basic		7	9
% At or Above Proficient		94	93
% At Advanced		72	79
African American (Number Tested)		11	17
% At Basic		46	29
% At or Above Proficient		18	29
% At Advanced		46	41
White (Number Tested)		307	356
% At Basic		3	3
% At or Above Proficient		97	98
% At Advanced		80	75
Hispanic (Number Tested)		21	27
% At Basic		25	4
% At or Above Proficient		75	96
% At Advanced		24	59
Free and Reduced Meals (Number Tested)		*	*
Special Education (Number Tested)		50	38
% At Basic		18	29
% At or Above Proficient		82	71
% At Advanced		32	38
Limited English Proficient(Number Tested)		13	10
% At Basic		39	30
% At or Above Proficient		62	70
% At Advanced		15	30

- Less than 10 students tested

Maryland School Assessment Results – Math Grade 7
Thomas W. Pyle Middle School 2002-2005
Testing Month: March

	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
GRADE 7 SCORES			
% At Basic		11	9
% At or Above Proficient		42	38
% At Advanced		47	53
Number of Students Tested		386	453
Number of Students Excluded		0	0
Percent of Students Excluded		0	0
Asian American (Number Tested)		46	53
% At Basic		7	9
% At or Above Proficient		94	93
% At Advanced		72	79
African American (Number Tested)		11	17
% At Basic		46	29
% At or Above Proficient		55	71
% At Advanced		46	41
White (Number Tested)		307	356
% At Basic		9	8
% At or Above Proficient		91	92
% At Advanced		80	75
Hispanic (Number Tested)		21	27
% At Basic		33	11
% At or Above Proficient		67	89
% At Advanced		50	59
Free and Reduced Meals (Number Tested)		*	*
Special Education (Number Tested)		50	38
% At Basic		48	37
% At or Above Proficient		52	63
% At Advanced		16	16
Limited English Proficient (Number Tested)		15	10
% At Basic		33	20
% At or Above Proficient		67	80
% At Advanced		20	50

*Less than 10 students tested

Maryland School Assessment Results – Reading Grade 8
Thomas W. Pyle Middle School 2002-2005
Testing Month: March

	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
GRADE 8 SCORES			
% At Basic	8	9	6
% At or Above Proficient	92	91	94
% At Advanced	74	64	58
Number of Students Tested	435	439	400
Number of Students Excluded	0	0	0
Percent of Students Excluded	0	0	0
Asian American (Number Tested)	50	55	45
% At Basic	8	13	7
% At or Above Proficient	92	89	98
% At Advanced	74	64	78
African American (Number Tested)	13	*	14
% At Basic	39	*	39
% At or Above Proficient	62	*	79
% At Advanced	23	*	36
White (Number Tested)	345	364	317
% At Basic	5	7	5
% At or Above Proficient	95	93	95
% At Advanced	79	67	63
Hispanic (Number Tested)	27	15	23
% At Basic	11	33	17
% At or Above Proficient	89	67	83
% At Advanced	48	20	44
Free and Reduced Meals (Number Tested)	*	*	*
Special Education (Number Tested)	44	49	48
% At Basic	32	45	25
% At or Above Proficient	68	55	75
% At Advanced	30	12	25
Limited English Proficient	14	*	*
% At Basic	64	*	*
% At or Above Proficient	36	*	*
% At Advanced	14	*	*

* Less than 10 students tested

Maryland School Assessment Results – Math Grade 8
Thomas W. Pyle Middle School 2002-2005
Testing Month: March

	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
GRADE 8 SCORES			
% At Basic	11	15	12
% At or Above Proficient	93	91	92
% At Advanced	61	60	62
Number of Students Tested	436	442	400
Number of Students Excluded	0	0	0
Percent of Students Excluded	0	0	0
Asian American (Number Tested)	50	55	45
% At Basic	8	13	7
% At or Above Proficient	92	89	98
% At Advanced	74	64	78
African American (Number Tested)	14	*	13
% At Basic	62	*	43
% At or Above Proficient	39	*	57
% At Advanced	23	*	36
White (Number Tested)	345	364	317
% At Basic	9	14	10
% At or Above Proficient	91	86	90
% At Advanced	79	67	63
Hispanic (Number Tested)	27	15	23
% At Basic	19	40	26
% At or Above Proficient	82	60	74
% At Advanced	48	20	44
Free and Reduced Meals (Number Tested)	*	*	*
Special Education (Number Tested)	44	49	48
% At Basic	52	63	42
% At or Above Proficient	48	37	58
% At Advanced	16	12	23
Limited English Proficient (Number Tested)	14	11	*
% At Basic	43	46	*
% At or Above Proficient	57	55	*
% At Advanced	29	9	*

* Less than 10 students tested