Mass insight
education & research

BORDER STAR MONTESSORI:
School Readiness Assessment Final Report

Kansas City Public Schools Secondary and Signature School Reviews

Site Visit Date: January 21, 2020

Principal: Blake Rhyne

Mass Insight Team: Julie Shepherd & Francina Victoria

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School Readiness Assessment Purpose

Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS) has partnered with Mass Insight Education & Research, a national non-profit, to conduct school reviews of all secondary and signature schools. The purpose of these reviews is to:
- Surface individual school successes, challenges, and opportunities to inform continuous improvement efforts; and
- Surface trends across secondary and signature schools to:
  - understand how secondary and signature options contribute to the overall experience and expectation of the KCPS community and help achieve KCPS' 5-Year Strategic Plan goals; and
  - inform the identification of systems-level changes and school supports.

Mass Insight's research-based School Readiness Assessment (SRA) supports and accelerates school improvement by informing the development of strong school improvement plans that address a school's highest needs, as well as informing district-level improvement to better meet the needs of students and schools. In alignment with the Mass Insight theory of action (described on page 4) and based on more than 10 years of national experience and research in the field of school improvement, Mass Insight has identified seven elements that we observe to drive school improvement and school readiness and ensure the success of all students. The SRA is structured to analyze the extent to which these elements are in place.

School Readiness Assessment Process

The school review process follows three phases, including a comprehensive data/document review conducted prior to a campus visit; the on-site campus visit; and finally, analysis and report of findings.

Phase	Potential Activities
Pre-Site Visit *(December 2019)*	- Collect and review campus data and related documents to understand campus context, including principal, staff and student surveys. - Coordinate visit logistics to ensure a successful site visit.
Site Visit *(January 2020)*	- Conduct interviews and focus groups with a variety of campus stakeholders (e.g. teachers, students, administrators, counselors, instructional coaches, families, etc.). - Classroom, hallway, and common space walkthroughs (observations may not occur on the same date as your site-visit interviews and focus groups).
Post-Site Visit *(January- February 2020)*	The site visit team synthesizes and analyzes visit findings that surface priority focus area recommendations.

Overview of the Findings Report

This report begins with a **Data Profile** - a high level quantitative overview of the school's current demographics, culture and climate indicators, and recent academic performance. Next is a summary of **Strengths and Challenges** - the most salient and resounding headlines from Mass Insight's time on campus. These are not arranged by any particular element and may represent a confluence of factors that can help the school begin to prioritize strengths and challenges to focus on following the site visit. Mass Insight will also provide action-oriented **Recommendations** for how the school can improve and where they might prioritize efforts first. This might also be used to inform the revision or creation of a School Improvement Plan. Finally, the Appendix contains the **School Readiness Assessment Tool**, which provides specific evidence gathered during the review process and a rating (described in the next section) for each feature of each element. This section can be useful for delving into more specific and granular details. Mass Insight does not suggest attempting to tackle every feature all at once.

School Readiness Assessment Evidence and Rating System

Mass Insight's SRA Tool (included in Appendix) is designed to analyze the extent to which a school has elements of our theory of action in place, in relation to an exemplar description of each element (and the features that make up that element) at the highest performing schools. The Mass Insight team will use the SRA Tool to document evidence based on information gathered during the SRA activities to assign a rating for each feature. Ratings are designed to describe the extent to which evidence aligns to the exemplar descriptions at the highest performing schools. The features rated lowest do not necessarily mean that those features are in the most urgent need of attention; the recommendations describe what Mass Insight suggests addressing first.

Rating Level Key:
0: Not Meeting (no, or extremely limited, evidence of this feature; work on this feature has not yet started)
1: Somewhat Meets (some evidence of implementation of this feature)
2: Mostly Meets (considerable evidence of implementation of this feature)
3: Meets (robust evidence of implementation of this feature)

About Mass Insight and Our Theory of Action

Mass Insight is a national non-profit organization committed to transforming public schools into high-performing organizations and closing achievement gaps. Since 2007, Mass Insight has worked with schools, districts, and state education agencies to redesign systems and establish the conditions and capacity for district and school improvement. As part of this work, Mass Insight has conducted numerous School Readiness Assessments (SRAs) across the country.

In 2007, Mass Insight published *The Turnaround Challenge*[1], a nationally-recognized research report and call to action that highlighted the need for intervention in America's lowest-performing schools. Since 2009, Mass Insight has worked with schools, districts, and state education agencies in Massachusetts and across the country to redesign the systems that support chronically underperforming schools and to drive gains in student achievement. Building from our research and more than ten years of experience in turnaround, we recently revisited Mass Insight's theory of action and identified seven theory of action elements that we believe must be in place to ensure schools are successful.

Mass Insight's SRA is structured to analyze the extent to which elements of our theory of action are in place in schools. We seek to understand what student outcome data reveals, analyze evidence and hypothesize why challenges and successes exist, and help schools prioritize where to focus next.

We believe that if schools have:

Conditions: Sufficient school-level control over people, time, money, and program to address the root causes of low performance;

Planning: Evidence-based, actionable improvement plans that address the root causes of low performance informed by a review of existing conditions and input from school, district, and community stakeholders;

Leadership: A principal who can manage and communicate complexity while maintaining focus on the school's vision and key priorities;

Focus on Instruction: Processes and supports that help teachers work together to constantly improve and refine standards-based instructional practice so that students can engage in deep learning tasks;

Collective Responsibility: The school faculty and staff ensure there is collective responsibility for both the quality of instruction and student learning and success;

Performance Management: Consistent processes for using data to measure both implementation and outcomes to determine what's working and inform efforts to improve; and

Partnerships: Partnerships that help the school meet the multiple needs of teachers and students, *THEN schools will dramatically improve and student learning will increase.*
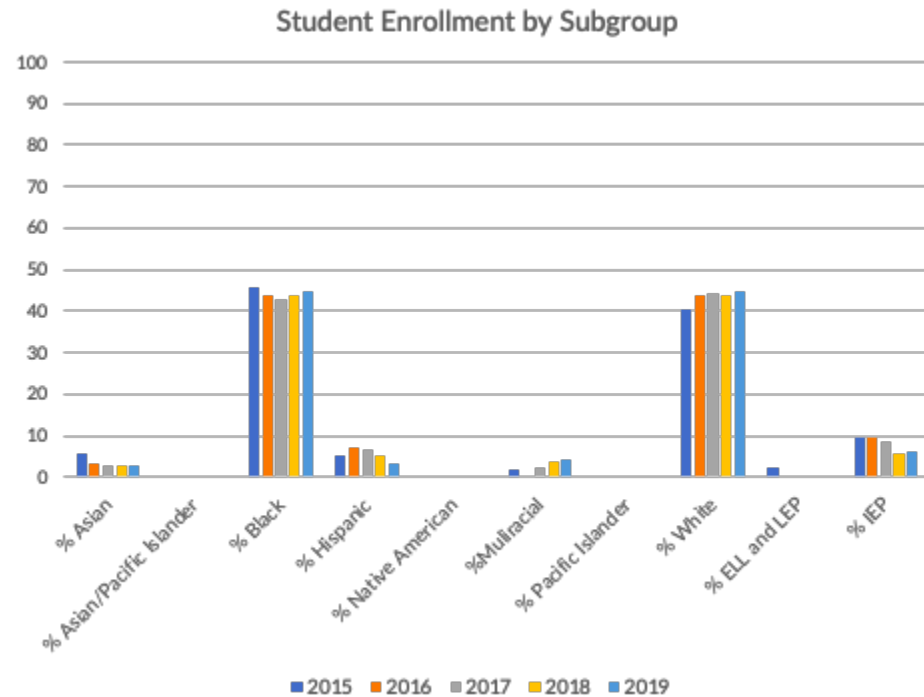

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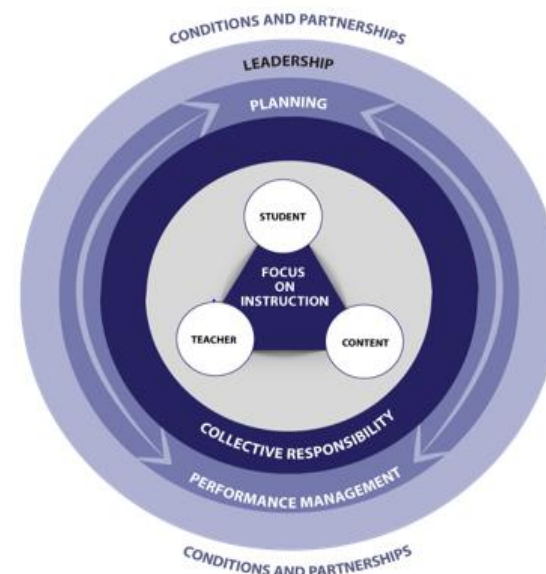
[1] *Mass Insight Education and Research*. Mass Insight Education and Research Institute, Inc., 2007, www.massinsight.org/resources/the-turnaround-challenge/
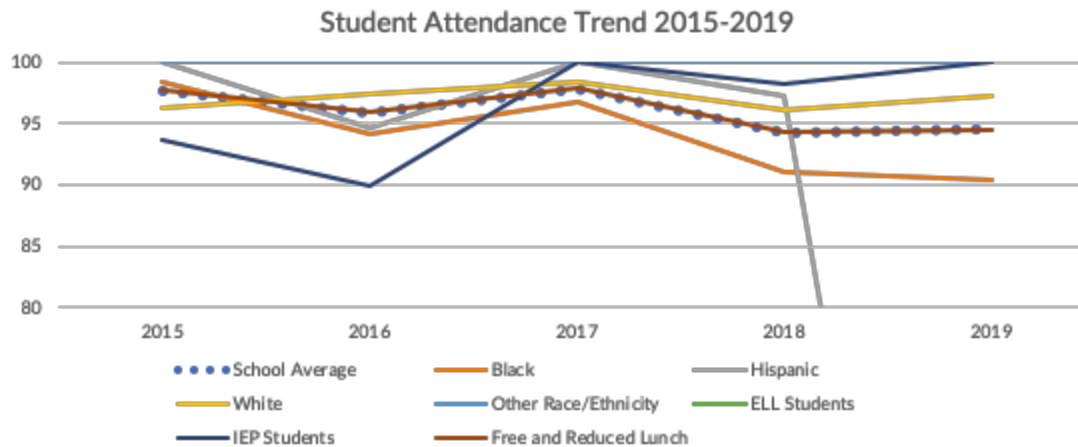
Student Enrollment and Attendance

Total Enrollment
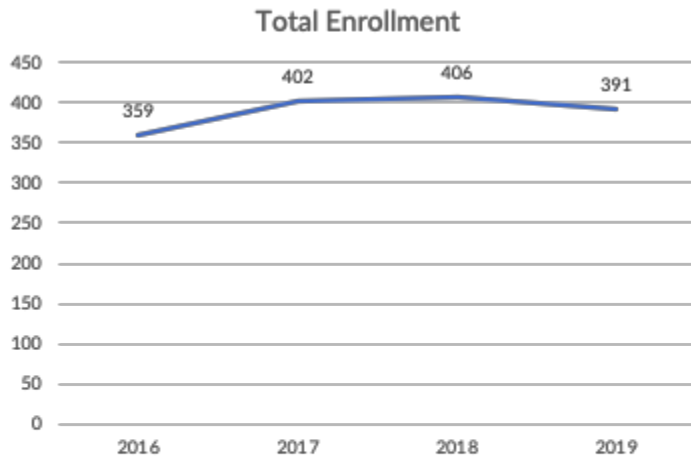
Student enrollment at Border Star Montessori over the last 4 years has increased and was 32 students higher in 2019 than in 2016.

Student Enrollment by Subgroup

■ 2015 ■ 2016 ■ 2017 ■ 2018 ■ 2019

Student Attendance Trend 2015-2019

Legend:
- • • • • School Average
- ——— Black
- ——— Hispanic
- ——— White
- ——— Other Race/Ethnicity
- ——— ELL Students
- ——— IEP Students
- ——— Free and Reduced Lunch

The proportional attendance rate for students at or above 90% (displayed in the graph to the left) at Border Star Montessori over the last 5 years has decreased around 3% in 2019. White and other race/ethnicity student attendance is consistently higher than the school-wide average, while Black student attendance is consistently lower than the school-wide average and other sub-group attendance in the last 4 years.

The total proportional attendance rate for the last 3 school years at Border Star Montessori was:
- 2017 – 98.8%
- 2018 – 96.2%
- 2019 – 96.8%

which demonstrates a 2% decrease in student attendance over the last 3 years.

STUDENT MOBLITY	Fall Enrollment	Additional Enrollment	Transfers	Mobility Rate
2017	283	2	34	11.9
2018	250	2	22	8.73
2019	246	0	24	9.8

K-6 student enrollment at Border Star has decreased by 37 students over the last 3 years. While a few additional students enroll throughout the year, there are a number of transfers, resulting in mobility rates between 8-12% for the last 3 years.

Note: The state calculates mobility rates based on K-12 enrollment data and does not include PK. Total enrollment in this table does not include PK enrollment.

Student Discipline

DISCIPLINE RATES	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Enrollment	261	266	283	250	246
Total Number of Incidents	0	0	0	0	0
Incident Rate (per 100 students)	0	0	0	0	0
Type of Removal					
In-School Suspension (number | rate)	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0
Out of School Suspension (number | rate)	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0
Expulsion (number | rate)	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0
Length of Removal					
10 Consecutive Days (number | rate)	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0
More than 10 Consecutive Days (number | rate)	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0	0 | 0.0

The incident rate remained steady at 0% over the last 5 years.

Note: The state reports discipline incidents for K-12 enrollment and does not include PK. Total enrollment in this table does not include PK.
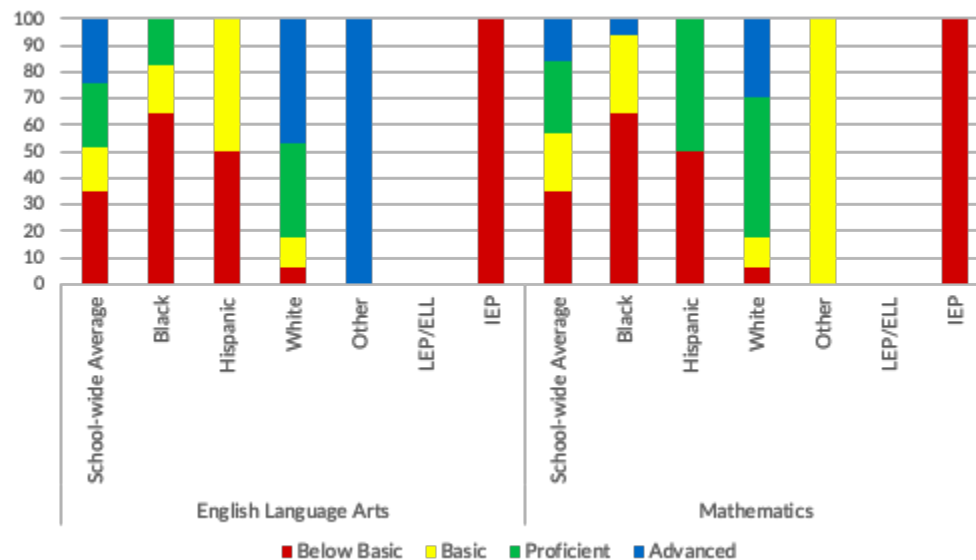
Student Academic Performance

2019 School-wide MAP Results
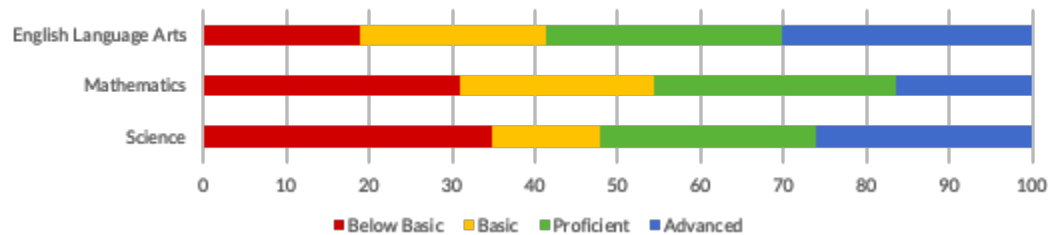
School-wide performance on MAP tests in 2019 showed 58.7% of students were proficient/advanced in English Language Arts, 45.7% were proficient/advanced in Mathematics, and 52.2% were advanced/proficient in Science.

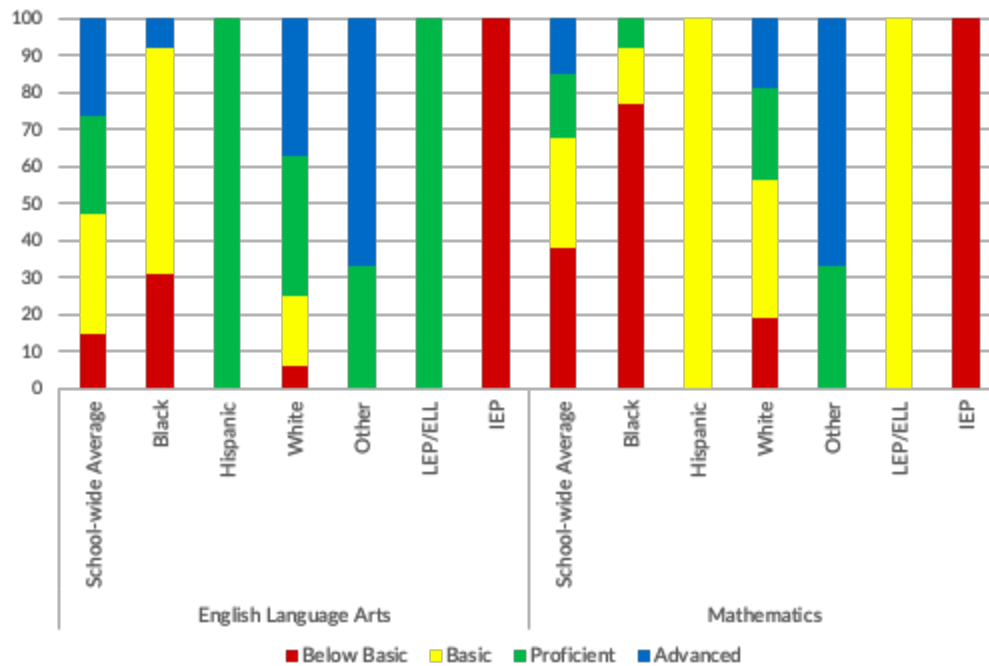### 3rd Grade 2019 MAP Proficiency Rates

3rd grade ELA MAP exams in 2019 showed 48.6% of students were proficient/advanced. 17.6% of Black students, 82.4% of White students, and 100% of other students were proficient. No Hispanic students or students with IEPs were proficient.

3rd grade Mathematics MAP exams in 2019 showed 43.2% of students were proficient/advanced. 5.9% of Black students, 50% of Hispanic students, and 82.3% of White students were proficient. No other or students with IEPs were proficient.

Note: the "other" descriptor refers to a racial or ethnic subgroup or combined subgroup of fewer than 10 students.

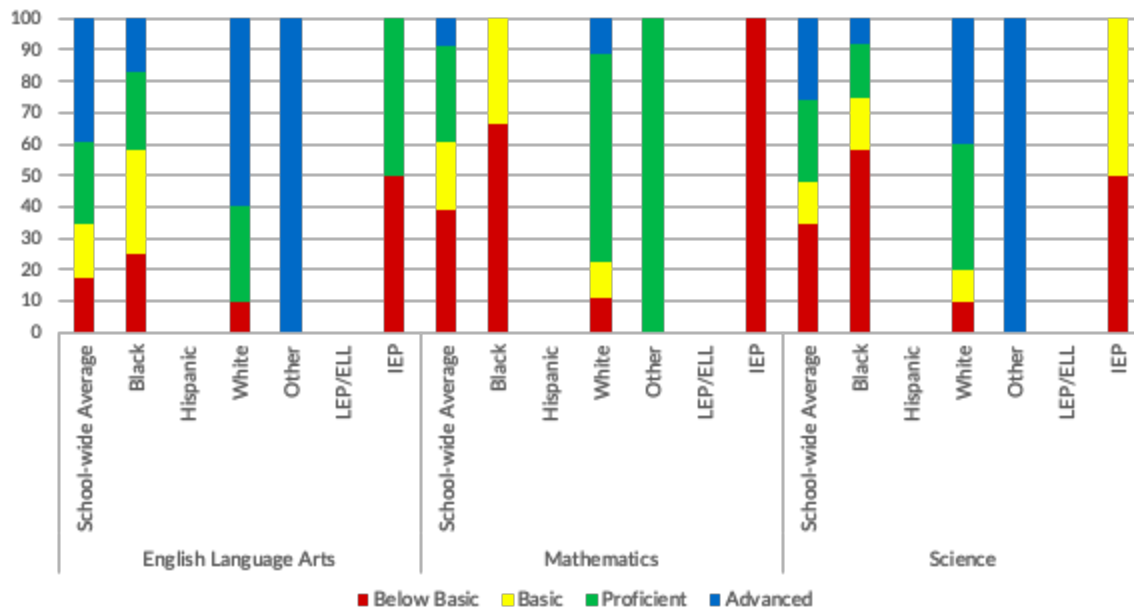## 4th Grade 2019 Mathematics MAP Proficiency Rates

4th grade ELA MAP exams in 2019 showed 53% of students were proficient/advanced. 7.7% of Black students, 100% of Hispanic students, 75% of White students, 100% of other students, and 100% of LEP/ELL students were proficient. No students with IEPs were proficient.

4th grade Mathematics MAP exams in 2019 showed 32.3% of students were proficient/advanced. 7.7% of Black students, 43.8% of White students, and 100% of other students were proficient. No Hispanic students, LEP/ELLs, or students with IEPs were proficient.

Legend: ■ Below Basic ☐ Basic ■ Proficient ■ Advanced

Note: the "other" descriptor refers to a racial or ethnic subgroup or combined subgroup of fewer than 10 students.
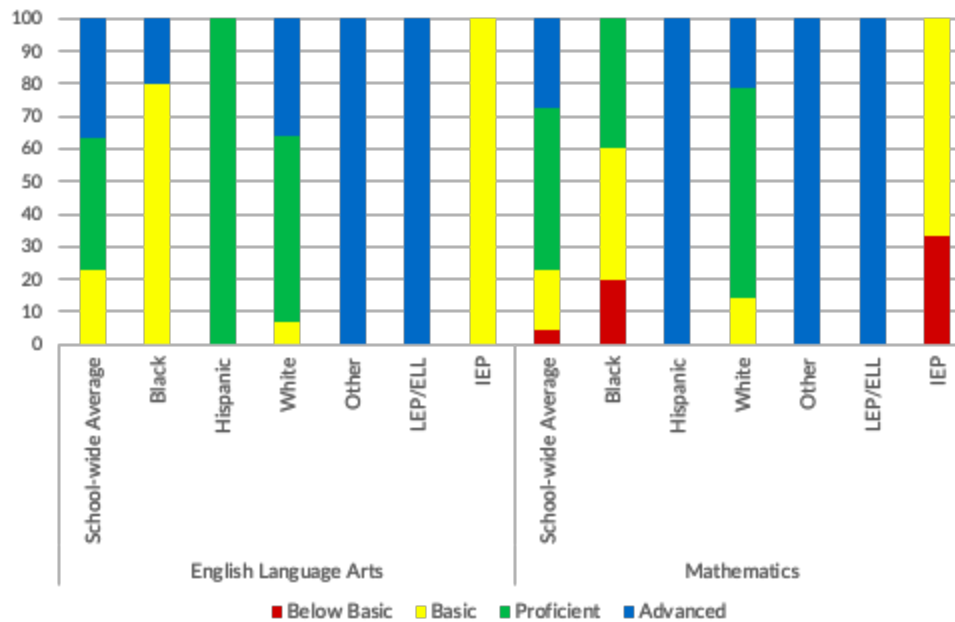
5th Grade 2019 MAP Proficiency Rates

5th grade ELA MAP exams in 2019 showed 65.2% of students were proficient/advanced. 41.7% of Black students, 100% of White students, 100% of other students, and 50% of students with IEPs were proficient.

5th grade Mathematics MAP exams in 2019 showed 39.1% of students were proficient/advanced. 77.8% of White students and 100% of other students were proficient. No Black students or students with IEPs were proficient.

5th grade Science MAP exams in 2019 showed 52.2% of students were proficient/advanced. 25% of Black students, 80% of White students, and 100% of other students were proficient. No students with IEPs were proficient.

■ Below Basic   □ Basic   ■ Proficient   ■ Advanced

Note: the "other" descriptor refers to a racial or ethnic subgroup or combined subgroup of fewer than 10 students.

6th Grade 2019 MAP Proficiency Rates

6th grade ELA MAP exams in 2019 showed 77.3% of students were proficient/advanced. 20% of Black students, 100% of Hispanic students, 92.8% of White students, 100% of other students, and 100% of LEP/ELLs were proficient. No students with IEPs were proficient.

6th grade Mathematics MAP exams in 2019 showed 77.3% of students were proficient/advanced. 40% of Black students, 100% of Hispanic students, 85.7% of White students, 100% of other students, and 100% of LEP/ELLs were proficient. No students with IEPs were proficient.

Legend: ■ Below Basic □ Basic ■ Proficient ■ Advanced

Note: the "other" descriptor refers to a racial or ethnic subgroup or combined subgroup of fewer than 10 students.

Strengths

- **There is an acknowledgment among staff that standards-aligned, grade-level appropriate instruction should be provided in all classrooms at Border Star.** Recent years' declining state assessment scores led to the selection of a traditionally-trained principal who is creating the support and accountability structures for Border Star staff to provide students with standards-based instruction in a Montessori setting. While public Montessori schools around the country are also working on this delicate balance, the Border Star community of both staff and families realize that in order to remain competitive and true to their Montessori model, students must be provided grade-level appropriate and standards-aligned instruction.

- **All grade-band teachers at Border Star are Montessori trained.** The district has provided funds over the past several years to ensure teachers at Border Star receive Montessori training, in addition to Montessori training for the new principal and assistant principal.

- **Family engagement and support for Border Star is strong.** Family focus group participants share that they receive regular communication from the school and that teachers are communicative. In addition to an active PTA, families desire continued and additional opportunities to be involved in the school through activities and sessions about the Montessori model.

Challenges

- **Staff trust and culture is low at Border Star.** Due to recent staff changes and the integration of standards-based instruction into the Montessori model, the majority of staff feels lost, rejected, and unsure about the direction of the school. Only 9% of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that "there is trust amongst all staff at my school." From focus group comments, there seem to be many factions within the school. Yet the leadership team is working to build a structure to support more teacher voice, as well as opportunities to learn more about colleagues both within and across grade bands.

- **Observation and assessment data is not yet driving instructional decisions in the classroom.** Even though PLCs are examining both interim and iReady data, there was no mention from teachers about how data is utilized to make daily instructional decisions or plans for individual student learning paths. Montessori observational data was discussed most when teachers talked about determining student learning progressions. This further reflects the staff's acknowledgment of the need for standards-based instruction, yet uncertainty about how that looks in practice.

- **Students and families are concerned about the grade-level appropriateness of instruction they are receiving at Border Star as compared to other schools**. Due to the competitiveness of signature school admittance and the decrease in school-level performance on state assessments, families are not confident that their child/ren is receiving rigorous enough or grade-level appropriate instruction, as defined by state standards. Older students express concern that the Montessori approach - which does not involve homework and has only recently begun mentioning "grade-level work" - is not adequately preparing them for middle school experiences.

1. **Create opportunities for Border Star staff to connect with other public Montessori school staff about how to effectively integrate standards-based instruction within a Montessori school.** Current staff is Montessori trained and administrators traditionally trained, leaving both sides uncertain about how to effectively bridge the gap. Through conversations with other Montessori staff who have or are currently working through this process, teachers and administrators will be able to better visualize how to effectively provide standards-based instruction in Montessori schools without losing the Montessori approach. Observation opportunities could also be beneficial as understanding grows and practices change. Organizations such as the American Montessori Society should be able to support district and school leaders in locating high-quality public Montessori schools to visit, as well as resources to support schools undertaking this sort of integration of approaches. Holliday Montessori is also a potential source for mutually beneficial collaboration, as they are a bit further along in the integration process.

2. **Staff need targeted and increased professional development opportunities in order to increase their understanding of standards-based instruction and how to utilize the standards to develop grade-level learning experiences for all students.** As in the Montessori model, future student success depends on developing the necessary skills and knowledge at each stage of a student's educational journey. All teachers, because standards-based instruction is new, need to be exposed to and understand the learning progression for students P3 through grade 6 to best instruct students at the grade level they teach. There are currently no opportunities for teachers to have conversations among grade-level bands in the school, which would be beneficial for Montessori alignment as well.

Appendix: School Readiness Assessment Tool

Mass Insight's SRA Tool is designed to analyze the extent to which a school has elements of our research-based theory of action in place, in relation to an exemplar description of each element (and the features that make up that element) at the highest performing schools. The Mass Insight team uses this SRA Tool to document evidence and analysis based on information gathered during the SRA activities to assign a rating for each feature. Ratings are designed to describe the extent to which evidence aligns to the exemplar descriptions at the highest performing schools.

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Element	At Highest Performing Schools	Rating	Discussion of Evidence
Focus on Instruction: Processes and systems help teachers work together to constantly improve and refine standards-based instructional practice, ensuring students engage in deep learning tasks.	***School Model and Instructional Vision*** *Signature schools*: The school implements a clearly defined and observable school model that meets student interests and demand. *Secondary schools:* The school implements clear pathways for student progression through high school to college and careers. There is a clear instructional vision that aligns with the district-wide framework for critical thinking, problem-solving and cultural responsiveness for 21st Century learning, and the school model. It focuses on the success of all students, aligns with standards, and helps build an understanding of the actions that educators must take to accelerate student learning. The vision is widely understood and drives school decision-making. All teachers and administrators can describe how their work moves the school closer to meeting the vision.	1: Somewhat Meets	• Border Star is a Montessori school; as such, it implements the Montessori curriculum and uses Montessori instructional methods and resources. • During the current school year, Border Star administration and staff are working to integrate the state curricular standards into classroom instruction. There is a lack of clarity and support about how this looks instructionally and how to make this transition within a Montessori school, resulting in confusion and frustration among staff. • The school's newly revamped mission statement is "The staff of Border Star is committed to building relationships and upholding high expectations for all in an intentionally prepared environment." The mission is intended to reflect the instructional values of the Montessori approach, as well as the expectations set by the state and district. • Administration, staff, and students recognize the need to increase instructional rigor and provide grade-level appropriate standards-based instruction; however, the process for integrating it into the Montessori model is difficult given a Montessori-trained staff and traditionally-trained administration team.

Focus on Instruction, continued.			• The Montessori classroom model is based on three grade bands: P3-K, 1-3, and 4-6. Border Star has eight P3-K teachers in the Children's House, four lower grade teachers, and four upper grade teachers. • Survey responses indicate 91% of respondents agree or strongly agree that "my school has a clearly articulated theme or model, which is evident in daily student learning experiences."
	Readiness to Learn The school implements consistent, equitable, and asset-based policies, procedures, and practices that foster positive learning school experiences that validate all students' social-emotional and cultural identities. As a result, students feel safe, valued, cared for, challenged, and supported at school. Student and family needs are identified and connected with resources and services to ensure all students can self-regulate and engage in learning with agency. The school has programs, structures, and extracurricular activities (such as looping, advisory, morning meetings, intramurals, clubs) to expand and nurture students' sense of belonging and ensure that every student has enriching experiences and strong relationships with adults.	1: Somewhat Meets	• The Montessori model relies heavily on developing a sense of community within each classroom and within the school. During the Children's House grade band, students begin learning how to direct and manage their own learning, as well as how to mediate interactions with their peers. The Montessori learning environment is open and embraces student choice and freedom, creating a sense of ownership within students. • Social grace and care of self are other core components of the Montessori philosophy that students learn early in the program. Older peers and teachers help younger and new students understand the rules and procedures that guide the Montessori learning experience. • Students are greeted at the door and greet one another, which creates a welcoming environment and builds community in the classroom. • The majority of students in focus groups report feeling safe and belonging at Border Star. • Some staff share concerns about microaggressions toward some students and believe that while the majority of students feel safe, included, and have a relationship with teachers, there are students who do not and are repeatedly sent to the office. • Staff have received training on cultural awareness and trauma-informed instruction; the extent to which it is lived and experienced by staff and students is unclear. • Students share they have peer and teacher support when they need help academically, and that students are generally treated differently yet appropriately according

Focus on Instruction, continued.			• to their grade level. However, many students mentioned the unfairness of class punishments for one or two students' misbehaviors. • Survey responses indicate 73% of surveyed staff agree or strongly agree that "policies and practices are consistently and equitably implemented for all students." • Several families express concern about the lenient learning environment and what they perceive to be a lacking school-wide philosophy to managing student behavior.
	Teacher Development & Feedback There are systems, structures, and practices that prioritize teacher development based on data and district priorities including trauma sensitive strategies. There are feedback cycles and follow-up. All teachers describe receiving frequent, consistent, coherent, and coordinated high-quality feedback on teaching that is grounded in an instructional vision and that will lead to accelerated learning for all students.	**1: Somewhat Meets**	• Staff have received trauma-informed training from the district; however, there are no district-offered PD opportunities about the Montessori model. A few collaborative meetings have taken place between Holliday and Border Star, the two Montessori schools in the district. • Observation and feedback is provided by the principal and assistant principal, who have normed on instructional expectations. Staff share that most observational feedback is centered on more traditional school methods, not the Montessori approach, and does not center on the whole child. • Observation and feedback has been an ongoing source of contention between administration and teachers because of their different perspectives. Administrators have taken teacher feedback about observation into account, yet it remains unclear the extent to which observation feedback cycles are providing consistent, coherent, and coordinated feedback to teachers on Montessori, standards-based instruction, or both approaches. • Staff are motivated to improve their instructional practice. Survey responses indicate that 64% of surveyed staff agree or strongly agree that "I receive frequent, clear, and actionable feedback about my instructional practice that helps me improve," while 41% of staff agree or strongly agree that "all forms of professional

Focus on Instruction, continued.			development are coordinated and of high quality to improve my professional practice." ● Administration collects lesson plans but struggles to provide feedback due to capacity and the Montessori lesson plan model which is individualized for students.
	Teacher Collaboration (PLCs) Teachers working in teams have time, systems and structures to maximize collaborative time in instructional teams (such as by grade level or content area). Teachers work towards commonly set and motivating goals that help all students progress towards the highest priority academic standards and improve critical thinking skills; these teams receive high-quality feedback and enjoy a trusting culture that includes open and constructive dialogue.	1: Somewhat Meets	● Weekly PLC meetings take place among grade-band teachers and are led by the principal or assistant principal. ● Teachers share that common PLC topics include state standards, iReady data, RTI, common formative assessments and mainly focus on math. ● PLCs examine student data together, which is a new practice for Border Star staff this year. 55% of surveyed staff agree or strongly agree that "the work of my PLC directly connects to the standards my students must master to be proficient/on grade level." ● It is unclear from teachers and administrators the extent to which PLCs are organized and clearly structured to maintain focus on student learning. ● Half of surveyed staff agree or strongly agree that "there is a clear vision and purpose for PLCs at my school." ● Teachers share mixed feelings about the utility of PLCs, but appreciate their collaborative nature and opportunity to meet with peers. ● The administration's vision for PLCs is for them to be led by teachers and focus on what standard mastery looks like and how to provide intervention support for students who struggle to demonstrate mastery.

Focus on Instruction, continued.	**Curriculum, Standards & Assessment** Instructional work is guided by curricula and instructional resources (including technology) aligned to standards and aligned across and between grade levels. It is responsive to students' cultures, experiences, needs, and interests. Formative and externally-developed summative assessments are aligned with both standards and the sequence of instruction. These assessments yield frequent, accurate, and actionable data about student progress towards the highest priority standards.	1: Somewhat Meets	- Instruction is and has traditionally been rooted in the Montessori approach and resources. Recently, however, the district has required the school to intentionally integrate standards-based instruction into K-6 classrooms at Border Star. This has resulted in non-Montessori instructional methods and resources, as well as the use of district formative assessments and resulting conversations about assessment results. - Teachers describe a delicate balance between the need to focus on standards and a traditional Montessori model. - Many staff express concern about the amount of testing they are required to administer from the district. Not only does it seem to run counter to the Montessori model, but it also regularly interferes with instructional time. However, survey responses indicated that 68% of respondents agree or strongly agree that "summative/ interim assessments yield accurate and actionable data about student progress toward standard mastery." - Staff express a need for greater alignment and cohesiveness between lower- and upper-grade bands in order for the school to improve academically. - Three iReady diagnostics support teachers in monitoring student progress toward district priority standards. - The majority of students in focus groups report feeling unprepared or kind of prepared to take and perform well on assessments. Many also share that noisy testing environments decrease their concentration and performance. - Students' identities and other cultures are shared and learned about through Montessori geography lessons, which teachers say connects students to others around the world. Survey responses indicate 87% of respondents agree or strongly agree "our curriculum is responsive to the needs, identities, and backgrounds of our students." - In the Montessori model, students free write with no feedback from peers or teachers, so students do not know how well they are writing. Around half of teachers

			are open to providing more direct writing instruction, according to internal school survey responses.
Focus on Instruction, continued.	***Data-Driven Decision-Making for Classroom Instruction*** The academic progress of all students is monitored by teachers and students. Systems, structures, and processes support teachers—individually and in teams (such as the Problem Solving Team (PST))—to frequently and routinely use a variety of student data, including disaggregated academic data, to pinpoint class and student needs. Data inquiry cycles drive on-going instructional decisions, including grouping, differentiation, enrichment, intervention, and personalized plans for meeting graduation requirements.	1: Somewhat Meets	● The Montessori model relies heavily on teacher and support staff observation of student learning and progress. The school has implemented district assessments this year to also support standard mastery progress monitoring. ● Teachers describe student progress monitoring through the lens of the Montessori model, mainly relying on observation and student self evaluation of their progress. ● Staff express interest in a checklist approach to help them ensure student skill development, in addition to standard mastery. Staff understand the need to ensure students are on grade level as described by state standards. ● The school utilizes an RTI model to monitor student progress and address students who are falling behind. Academic progress has been specified for students by grade-level standards and by quarter. ● Teachers monitor the progress their students make toward standard mastery utilizing iReady results, observations, and anecdotal notes. This is the first year in which iReady has been required for all students. ● Teachers share that iReady results show student progression on informational text, comprehension, writing, and reading. They note that ELA has shown the most growth. ● There is an intent to use iReady data to guide lesson planning and small group instruction based on their individual learning needs. ● Students share concerns about knowing when they've learned something or if the work they've done is correct. Observations of student work in hallways reflect that student work is not consistently corrected for accuracy. ● The PST is led by the counselor. A referral process is in place, followed by a team meeting to create appropriate interventions that are documented and reviewed 4-6 weeks later.

| Focus on Instruction, continued. | **Rigorous Classroom Practice**
All students describe, and are observed, learning high-level and grade-level appropriate knowledge and skills in classrooms where each student is challenged; teachers are observed bringing the school's instructional vision to life in their classrooms. All students demonstrate progress toward stated learning objectives through their work or responses. | 1:
Somewhat Meets | • The Montessori model at Border Star does not approach instruction with a lens of rigor; instead, instruction is about meeting the individual learning needs of each child by allowing students to direct their own learning process. This approach includes extensive teacher monitoring of student progress in order for small group or individual student lessons for students when students are ready or request them.
• The Montessori model is centered on a 3-hour morning meeting block of uninterrupted student-led learning time.
• Some staff are reluctant to post learning objectives in the classroom because it does not align with the Montessori model; however, administration is attempting to enforce small steps like this to integrate grade-level standards into classroom practice. Teachers are also working to outline standards to understand what students need to learn at each grade level.
• Students describe their learning process as practicing and working on it a lot. They also share that lessons seem random and inconsistent and that there's a lot of change in the topics they learn about.
• The majority of students report not feeling prepared for the next grade level or school, some academically and some socially. They mention feeling unprepared for homework in middle school because it's something they have not experienced at Border Star.
• Students question why teachers are not teaching grade-level work, as many times teachers announce when they provide grade-level work. Students also mention that they find it difficult to focus and remember the content teachers present in preparation for assessments.
• Staff report variance in the level of student engagement.
• The majority of families in the focus group believe their child(ren) is not being adequately challenged. Some mentioned not knowing because students do not have homework, and because teachers do not reach out with information about student performance. |

| Focus on Instruction, continued. | **Supports for Special Populations**
There is a strategy in action for ensuring that special populations of students—including students with disabilities and ELLs— are accurately identified, and receive integrated, inclusive, and high-quality instructional support. Students' progress is monitored to ensure that they are moving expediently towards success in an inclusion environment. A variety of models and supports, including interventions, ensure students are adequately challenged and ultimately successful. | 2: Mostly Meets | • According to staff, students with disabilities are well served in the Montessori learning environment because instruction is tailored to each individual student's ability and pace, making accommodations and small group instruction the norm. The Montessori co-teaching model further supports students with disabilities with additional staff.
• Survey responses indicate 77% of respondents agree or strongly agree that "students with disabilities receive integrated, inclusive, and high-quality instructional support throughout the school."
• No specialized training explicitly about supporting special populations is available for Montessori teachers.
• Staff express frustration with the slow process to have students tested for specialized support, as the counselor is tasked with assessment.
• Border Star has few students with disabilities and ELLs. |

Element	At Highest Performing Schools	Rating	Discussion of Evidence
Collective Responsibility: *The school faculty and staff ensure there is collective responsibility for both the quality of instruction and student learning and success.*	**Systems and Structures for School-wide Continuous Improvement** Leadership effectively implements systems and structures to cultivate shared ownership for school-wide continuous improvement for both the quality of instruction and each students' learning. A representative group of building leaders, teachers, and staff (e.g., ILT) takes ownership for implementation and progress monitoring of school improvement.	1: Somewhat Meets	• The leadership team consists of building administrators and one teacher representative from each grade band. The group meets monthly. • The team acknowledges this is a development year for the team, but believes it acts as a conduit for conveying teacher suggestions and comments to administration. In its current development state, the leadership team does not yet focus on the quality of instruction and student learning. • Leadership team members are currently focused on improving the school climate, bringing the staff together in a positive way, and trying to build staff buy-in for initiatives. Staff surveys indicate relationships need to be developed among teachers. • Staff were surveyed for interest in leadership team participation, yet some were asked without expressing

Collective Responsibility, continued.			interest and others who expressed interest were not asked to join. Most leadership team members are more experienced teachers. Leadership team members are supportive of the new administrators and believe the school is moving in the right direction. ● Staff not on leadership team are skeptical about perceived alignment of the team to the exclusion of other staff. ● Survey responses indicate 30% of respondents agree or strongly agree that "a representative group (e.g. ILT) takes ownership for implementation and progress monitoring of school improvement."
	School-wide Beliefs and Trust Staff have, and inculcate in students, the belief that all students can and will learn. This motivates all to continuously improve teaching and learning. Staff demonstrate individual and collective responsibility for student learning and behavior that extends beyond individual classrooms or departments and permeates the school. Staff intentionally promote the success for all students, which results in all students feeling valued, supported, and challenged to learn in and out of school. Interactions between adults in the building are positive and supportive, resulting in a sense of trust and partnership among staff. Staff own the success of all students. And there is a shared culture of continuous improvement for all students, staff, and schoolwide success.	1: Somewhat Meets	● There is conflict within the school about how to balance and integrate the Montessori approach with standards-based instruction, which the school is ultimately held to by the state and district. ● Trust is still developing between the new administrators and teaching staff, as indicated in focus group and survey responses: 9% of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that "there is trust amongst all staff at my school." ● Some staff report a low morale within the school, due to tense relationships and interactions with administrators and teachers. Several staff members describe the work environment as hostile because of repeated administrator reprimands. ● It is unclear the extent to which staff feel responsibility for student learning. While there is a school-wide belief that all students can learn (as evidenced by focus groups and survey responses), on whom the role and responsibility for student learning falls is not fully realized. 55% of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that "all staff at my school demonstrate a responsibility for all students' learning and behaviors, beyond just the students in their classroom or grade level." ● Staff mention a recent PD session involving the Meyers-Briggs personality assessment as effective in learning about fellow staff members and their processing styles, prompting tolerance and positivity among staff.

Element	At Highest Performing Schools	Rating	Discussion of Evidence
Planning: *Evidence-based, actionable improvement plans that address the root causes of low performance, informed by a review of existing conditions with input from school, district, and community stakeholders.*	**Planning Processes** School stakeholders are actively engaged in evidence-based processes to identify and analyze root causes of low performance. These processes include honest conversations about how the school works and an examination of data, including disaggregated data. The processes produce no more than four major improvement strategies that planning participants believe can be implemented and will lead to substantial improvement.	1: Somewhat Meets	- This is the first year the school has had a school improvement plan because of past performance. - It is unclear the extent to which school stakeholders were involved in the process of developing the plan or what data was examined.
	The School Improvement Plan The school has one evidence-based, equity-focused actionable school improvement plan that addresses the root causes of low performance. The school plan focuses the school's energy and resources on no more than four strategies that will impact the instructional core and increase student learning. The plan identifies a set of action steps for each strategy, and, for each action step, assigns responsibility, provides a timeline, and identifies critical milestones. Teachers in the school can describe the school improvement strategies and explain how they expect the strategies to lead to improvement.	2: Mostly Meets	- Border Star's School Growth Plan has two goals: - align the Montessori curriculum to the Missouri Learning Standards, and - participate in culture and team-building activities to increase trust among staff. - The plan includes a theory of action, action steps, responsibility, timeline, resources needed, and measures of success for each goal. It does not include critical milestones. - Teachers describe the school's focus as raising student achievement and aligning the school mission, vision, and state standards. Staff do not describe specific improvement strategies. - Survey responses indicate 90% of respondents agree or strongly agree that "I know my school's top priorities for improvement."

Element	At Highest Performing Schools	Rating	Discussion of Evidence
Performance Management: Consistent processes for using data to measure both implementation and outcomes to determine what's working and inform efforts to improve.	***Plan Implementation & Management*** A team of school leaders meets frequently and regularly to manage plan implementation and impact with a focus on the following questions: ● *Have we done what we said we would do in the plan? If not, why not?* ● *Is it making a difference? What's the evidence?* ● *What do we have to do differently?*	0: Not Meeting	● There is no evidence that anyone is monitoring the School Growth Plan's implementation and impact. ● Staff did not articulate a process or approach for monitoring the plan.
	Monitors Key Indicators to Inform Decisions and Actions The school identifies and monitors a limited number of leading and lagging indicators to measure schoolwide progress, early warning signs, and/or plan next steps. Data is relevant, timely, accessible, accurate, and disaggregated by subgroup. There are clear roles and responsibilities for data collection and reporting. Teams regularly analyze data to identify disproportionality, identify root causes, establish key actions, and track progress of action items for continuous improvement.	1: Somewhat Meets	● Survey responses indicate 68% of respondents agree or strongly agree that "teams routinely monitor key data points to measure school-wide progress and at-risk student indicators." ● Through the PST process, at-risk students with attendance, behavior, or academic concerns are identified and a support plan developed. An RTI system supports teachers' monitoring of student academic progress. ● It is unclear who and with what frequency school-wide academic, attendance and behavior data is monitored holistically or disaggregated by subgroups. ● No records or data currently follow students from one grade band to the next.

Element	At Highest Performing Schools	Rating	Discussion of Evidence
Partnering: Partnerships that help the school meet the multiple needs of teachers and students.	**Family and Community Engagement** The school operates with the understanding that students' most important influencer and advocate are their families. The school intentionally builds community and family partnerships that honor and recognize families' existing knowledge and skills. The school connects with and engages families through intentional programming (e.g., series of family nights), regular two-way dialogue in family accessible languages, and capacity building (e.g. Parent Liaisons and Parents-as-Teachers program) designed to strengthen family-school partnership and further student learning including in the creation of student academic, college, and career plans. Staff have respect and knowledge of cultural norms and act in ways that are welcoming and responsive to students and their families.	2: Mostly Meets	● School staff and families agree that Border Star has very involved parents. Survey responses indicate 92% of respondents agree or strongly agree that "families are intentionally engaged as partners in student learning." ● The school communicates online with families on a monthly basis. Monthly communication includes updates from each teacher. ● Most teachers utilize Class Dojo to communicate with families and indicate that families are actively involved. However, family focus group participants mention that not all families have access to the technology required for school communication methods. ● Families express a desire for additional communication, specifically pertaining to student academic performance and school events. ● Staff acknowledge a need for more family engagement and activities. Families specifically named parent ed nights as helpful to their understanding of the Montessori approach. ● Families and staff also share that the PTA is great at supporting the school. ● It is unclear whether families feel welcome at the school and the extent to which they feel their cultural norms are respected and honored by staff.

	Strategic Partnerships
	The school has a limited number of community and business partnerships that support specific school and student needs, such as providing students with real-world application opportunities, college and career exploration, and rewards for positive student behavior. Students have equitable access to resources and partnerships. The school regularly reviews the effectiveness of partnership programs and makes changes as needed to meet student needs. Partnerships are actively managed to streamline efforts and impact.
		1: Somewhat Meets	● The school has partnerships with:
			  ○ St. Andrews for reading buddies,
			  ○ Lincoln CPA for student volunteers,
			  ○ Principals Connect,
			  ○ Project Safe,
			  ○ Success Mentors.
			● The school also has volunteers who come from a foster grandparent program, students from Lincoln CPA, churches, local organizations and businesses, and parents.
			● Border Star also has a pending partnership with Big Brothers, Big Sisters.

Element	At Highest Performing Schools	Rating	Discussion of Evidence
Conditions: *Sufficient school-level control over people, time, money and program to address the root causes of low performance to ensure all students can succeed.*	**Larger systems, structures, and practices (e.g. district, union, state, etc.) enable school-level control of conditions necessary to implement the plan and address the root causes of low performance** • People • Time • Money • Program The district recognizes that the school is the unit of improvement and allows for flexibility in the use of people, time, funding, and program so that the school can meet the needs of all students. Systems and structures are clear and aligned so that principals can focus on the success of all students. The district provides school leaders with the necessary support and ongoing capacity-building to achieve school priorities.	1: Somewhat Meets	• The principal supervisor has been supportive during the principal's first year. The principal supervisor, like the principal and AP, are all new to Montessori this year. Administrators desire more Montessori training to better support the school. • District-led principal PLCs are not tailored to the Montessori approach or Border School's signature model, making participation and applicability challenging. • Additional district-level curricular support is desired to integrate the state standards into the Montessori instructional approach. • All staff at Border Star have received or are currently receiving Montessori training, funding for which was provided by the district. However, Encore staff struggle to understand the Montessori model because they have received no training. • As a signature school, Border Star receives dedicated signature school funds from the district.

Conditions, continued.	Sufficient school leader authority over conditions to implement the plan and address the root causes of low performance	2: Somewhat Meets	As a signature school leader, the principal has authority to implement the Montessori model and is working with the district to ensure standards alignment.
	• People • Time • Money • Program The principal has the authority to create staff configurations and work assignments in alignment with the school's instructional model, design the right positions, and fill positions with the right people to do their most effective work. The principal has the authority to make changes to the school schedule such as PLCs, interventions, and/or other school-based professional development activities so that the school can meet the needs of all students. The principal has the authority to align the school's financial resources with school plan priorities. The principal has sufficient authority to shape teaching approaches and related services around the school's mission and the needs of all students.		- The principal has hiring authority, yet did not hire any staff this year beyond a full-time assistant principal because he is new to the school. - The principal has some authority over programming. There is a plan to open an additional classroom next year because of a long waitlist for spots. - Border Star is not a Title 1 school, thus limiting the school's operating budget. The school's dedicated signature school funds from the district are largely spent on necessary Montessori resources such as paraprofessional staff and Montessori instructional materials. - There are no additional funds available for a reading program, which is needed to increase reading performance but is not part of the Montessori model. - There is limited flexibility with the schedule as the Association Montessori Internationale requires a 3-hour morning work block to be an accredited Montessori school. This is complicated by the district's schedule for shared Encore staff and the needed time for grade-band PLCs.
	Enrollment and Configuration School configuration and/or application and student enrollment processes enable equitable access to a complete feeder. Families have data and access to make informed choices regarding the school/program that best meets their students' needs and interests. Principals have the ability to recruit students to their school and recruitment processes are equitable. The district and school principal cultivate a distinct, consistent brand presence for the school, resulting in positive stakeholder perceptions.	1: Somewhat Meets	- Enrollment at Border Star is high for the P3-K grade levels as it offers a free preschool-age opportunity to families, and there is an extensive waitlist for admittance. Families often leave Border Star after the P4 or K year to attend elsewhere. The families who stay do so because of the proximity to their home and investment in the Montessori model. - Students cannot join the Montessori program beyond kindergarten if they have not previously attended a Montessori school. 100% of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that "my school is an attractive/desirable option for students and families."

Element			

| **Conditions, continued** | | | Families express frustration with the application process, specifically that it operates on a first-come, first-serve basis. They also mention vague communication about deadlines, who needs to apply when, unresponsive help desk staff, and technical glitches with the web-based system. Staff believe few families understand the Montessori model or choose Border Star because it is a Montessori school, which families confirm. The online application does not provide families with much information regarding the school's model. Attempts to inform families about the Montessori approach typically result in the same group of families that attend. The most common pathways for students after Border Star are Paseo and Lincoln MS. There have been some families concerned recently that students are not accepted at Lincoln MS due to low test scores that indicate below-grade level learning. |

Element	**At Highest Performing Schools**	**Rating**	**Discussion of Evidence**
Leadership: Principal who can manage and communicate complexity while maintaining focus on the school's vision and key priorities.	**Stakeholder Investment and Mobilization** Principal effectively constructs and adapts communication and actions to inspire and invest diverse stakeholders in a clear, compelling, and inclusive vision for change. Staff receive timely and transparent updates on progress toward the vision. Staff understand the vision, their role in the vision, and rationale for changes. Principal builds a culture of collective responsibility for the success of every student by mobilizing and empowering teams that support and sustain the vision over time.	1: Somewhat Meets	- The principal works to build investment in the school's forward progress through collaboration opportunities, such as weekly department and grade-band PLCs. - School-wide staff meetings take place every Wednesday and focus on school operations. These meetings, as well as school-wide emails, help staff stay informed about events and happenings in the school. - Staff share that the principal works to hold honest discussions and be transparent with staff about his vision for change. Staff also feel that the principal has listened to staff voices and made adjustments to approaches and processes earlier in the school year based on the feedback. - Survey responses indicate 64% of respondents agree or strongly agree that "school communication is clear, consistent, and includes the why/what/how of changes."

Leadership, continued.			• Given the transition of new administrators to the building, staff express a desire for more consistency yet understand that trust building, collaboration, and routines take time to develop. • Survey responses indicate 77% of respondents agree or strongly agree that "I understand and am invested in our school leader's vision for change/improvement."
	Sustained Focus on Results Principal models and sets clear expectations for all staff, creating a culture of accountability for the learning of all students. Principal prioritizes efforts that advance progress of all students and school goals. Principal effectively advocates for the school needs with the district and reaches beyond the building to pursue needed resources and bring in best practices in order to meet the needs of all students.	1: Somewhat Meets	• In recent years, Border Star's performance on state assessments has declined in both math and reading. As such, the new principal has implemented new accountability measures to ensure teachers are providing an integrated standards-based instructional approach within the Montessori model. • With the recent leadership changes in the school and new accountability structure and priorities, some teachers feel they are being targeted and treated unfairly. • Survey responses indicate 77% of staff agree or strongly agree that "my principal models and sets high expectations for all staff," and 86% of respondents agree or strongly agree that "staff is held accountable for the success of all students." • In the leadership's first year and with the focus on internally ensuring standards-based instruction within the Montessori approach, the leadership has little time to pursue and advocate for needed resources. Support with best Montessori practices is very limited within the district.

Leadership, continued.	**Talent Management** Principal works with the district to forecast staffing needs and recruit quality, diverse candidates. Principal implements formal and rigorous staff selection, hiring, and induction processes. Hiring and assignment processes match staff to specific positions based on skill. Positions have clear roles, responsibilities, and performance expectations that align with the school's mission and plan, and hold staff to the success of all students. All teachers receive accurate and specific feedback through the evaluation process. Principal is intentional about retaining high-performing staff and designing and implementing staff succession plans.	2: Mostly Meets	• Teacher recruitment in the past has involved hiring non-Montessori trained teachers and providing them with training during their first two years in the classroom. There is an intent to recruit and hire teachers for open positions that are already Montessori trained. There are postings on Montessori websites and recruiting at colleges. • There is an understanding that school staff lack diversity and are not representative of the student population that they serve at Border Star. There is a desire to hire more people of color. • Teacher retention has not been an issue at Border Star in the past. The school utilizes the evaluation process to make decisions for non-renewable staff for the 20-21SY. Some staff share that they worry about teacher retention this year due to low morale. • Teacher evaluation responsibilities are divided between the principal and assistant principal. The quantity of feedback is determined by teacher certification status (i.e. tenured vs. provisional). The AP is also in charge of student discipline, the PST, and managing IEPs. The principal leads instruction and family engagement. • Survey responses indicate 55% of respondents agree or strongly agree that "roles and responsibilities of staff members are clear." • As the principal is in his first year, it is unclear what his onboarding plan for new staff will include.
	Resource Maximization Principal is adept at maximizing resources to meet the needs of all students and accomplish school goals. Principal demonstrates persistence, ingenuity, and resourcefulness in identifying untapped resources in the areas of time, money, programs, and partnerships. Those resources advance outcomes for every student.	1: Somewhat Meets	• Survey responses indicate 63% of respondents agree or strongly agree that "leadership is adept and creative at maximizing resources to meet the needs of all students and accomplish school goals." • Staff realize that persistence is necessary to ensure students can demonstrate grade-level standard mastery within a Montessori model and understands the teaching staff's reluctance to compromise the Montessori approach. • Because the principal is new, there are not yet clear examples of how resources are maximized to meet school goals.