

**Saginaw Valley State University**  
**Standards for an Educational Program**  
**Branch Line School**

---

**Standard I: Implementation, Delivery, and Support of the Educational Program and Curriculum**

**Key Question: Is the Public School Academy's (PSA) mission an integral part of the school's culture?**

**Area of Inquiry A: Mission**

***Our Mission:*** Branch Line School will guide students in an individualized, small school atmosphere that cultivates intellectual freedom, respect for others and service to the community in order to produce critical thinkers and informed global citizens.

- Students, staff and parents review and reflect on the mission of the school. Common language and understanding is sought around the various elements of the mission. Staff work through the mission at the beginning of each year. The staff has to work together to unpack the mission, identify the key pillars and understandings and, create common language that will be used in the school to support the mission. Language is memorialized on posters and in classrooms to support the integration and understanding of the mission in the culture throughout the building. This practice continues each year to further develop our understanding of the mission and inform new stakeholders.
- The mission is integrated into the culture of the school. Our community of parents, students, families, teachers, teacher assistants, and leadership are responsible for promoting a high level of respect and a culture of community. Culture is such a vital part of our mission that we have designed a position to focus on connecting students, staff, and parents to create a positive culture throughout the school.
- Students are given projects and assignments relating to the mission. In parent connection meetings, parents are asked to review, reflect on and respond to the mission of the school.
- The leadership team works collaboratively to facilitate and organize the implementation of the school's mission. The team continually cultivates intellectual freedom. The team welcomes all ideas, hears all thoughts, and works together to come to respectful and mutually agreeable decisions in all areas. On-going biweekly touch point meetings between leadership and staff encourage dialogue around implementation of the mission, educational program, and ensure continuous improvement.

**Key Question: Does the PSA's Educational Program focus on high academic achievement for all students?**

**Area of Inquiry B: Educational Program**

1. The PSA's mission statement, vision statement, and a statement of their beliefs are provided.
  - **Our Vision:** Branch Line will create and sustain an environment of respect, integrity, and meaningful learning. These guiding principles provide a framework encompassing a holistic vision that will enable students, families, teachers, and leadership to maintain a common and relentless focus on educating each child as an individual learner.
    - i. Students will become critical thinkers through active participation in the learning process through Activity Learning, Project-Based Learning and Service Learning.
    - ii. Students will gain the knowledge to become informed global citizens through service learning projects and community involvement.
    - iii. BLS will provide students with experiences and tools that allow them to achieve academic success by constructing knowledge in a meaningful way during thematic learning experiences and projects.
    - iv. Students will be encouraged to develop intellectual freedom.
    - v. All community members will exhibit respect for each other.
    - vi. BLS will provide students with multiple opportunities for authentic and meaningful service to the community.
    - vii. Students will use a variety of technological tools in an authentic manner to ensure technological literacy.
  - **Our Beliefs:**
    - i. We believe students will become critical thinkers through the opportunity to actively participate in their learning process (Project Based Learning).
    - ii. We believe students will become informed global citizens through participation in service learning projects and community involvement.
    - iii. We believe students can achieve academic success by building knowledge in a meaningful way during thematic units and projects. Teachers facilitate this learning by guiding the learning, sharing responsibility for standards mastery, sparking thinking, and cultivating positive, collaborative relationships.
    - iv. We believe students should be encouraged to develop intellectual freedom. Students are able to follow interests relating to a project topic. Dialogue among students and teachers drive the inquiry process for projects.
    - v. We believe that respect is important.

- vi. We believe that students should have multiple opportunities for authentic and meaningful service to the community, as a means to deeper learning and community awareness.
- vii. We believe students should be able to use a variety of technological tools in an authentic manner to ensure technological literacy and a strong base for research.

2. Research supporting the mission and beliefs is provided.

Collaborative Classrooms:

[https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/sites/default/files/media/private\\_node\\_uploads/core\\_principles\\_150226\\_1.pdf](https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/sites/default/files/media/private_node_uploads/core_principles_150226_1.pdf)

Student Centered Learning Communities:

<http://qedfoundation.org/>

Morning Meeting:

<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/morning-meeting-changing-classroom-culture-lisa-dabbs>

Project Based Learning:

[http://bie.org/about/why\\_pbl](http://bie.org/about/why_pbl)

<http://www.teachthought.com/learning/project-based-learning/difference-between-projects-and-project-based-learning/>

21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning and Citizenship:

<http://www.p21.org/>

Service Learning:

<http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1019&context=colleagues>

[http://bolstercollaborative.com/app/webroot/uploads/files/Brief\\_8\\_Service-Learning\\_-SL\\_9-18-13\\_final.pdf](http://bolstercollaborative.com/app/webroot/uploads/files/Brief_8_Service-Learning_-SL_9-18-13_final.pdf)

[http://www.academia.edu/12454450/A\\_critical\\_approach\\_to\\_social\\_emotional\\_learning\\_instruction\\_through\\_community\\_based\\_service\\_learning](http://www.academia.edu/12454450/A_critical_approach_to_social_emotional_learning_instruction_through_community_based_service_learning)

[http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/issuebrief\\_servicelearning.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/issuebrief_servicelearning.pdf)

Global Citizenship:

<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2010/09/29-education-winthrop>

3. A description is provided as to how the PSA delivers the curriculum in order to fulfill its mission and beliefs.
  - The mission and vision of Branch Line School are distilled down into a document that is given to all staff and parents that indicates the “Branch Line Ways of Thinking.” This document is reviewed with staff through facilitated meetings and with parents at Parent Connection Meetings. The document outlines the Mission, Vision, Educational Goals (outlined in the charter contract), and the model for Branch Line instruction (the Developmental Students Center Model- DSC). Branch Line teachers consistently work toward implementing the DSC teaching model in their classrooms. The model includes:
    - Teacher Role
      - Building relationships and norms
      - Guiding learning rather than simply disseminating facts
      - Sharing responsibility for learning WITH the learner
    - Teacher Actions
      - Sparking student thinking
      - Facilitating student talk and interaction
      - Integrating values and social skills
    - Student Actions
      - Generating ideas and questions
      - Talking with peers about content
      - Working in pairs and small groups
      - Reflecting on experiences
    - Branch Line teachers strive to be:
      - Reflective Practitioners
      - Child-centered in their instruction
      - Effective communicators
      - Strong facilitators
      - Coaches and mentors

Instruction at Branch Line School begins with a commitment to Standards Mastery Based Instruction. All activity, project and service project work begins with standards. From the standards, responsibility is gradually released to students throughout the school day and year. As teachers are implementing **Activity Learning** in the classrooms, they are identifying learning strengths and challenges of each student. Learning begins in **Morning Meeting** where teachers are collecting affective data, checking in with students, setting the objectives for the day and ensuring students are ready. Through Morning Meeting teachers and learners are:

- Facilitating social emotional learning which leads to educating the whole child
- Reinforcing curriculum
- Reinforcing the DSC Classroom Model
- Building, and reinforcing classroom culture
- Creating a platform for restorative work

- Building respectful relationships and character
- Reinforcing elements of the BLS mission: Respect for others, critical thinking

In multi-aged classrooms, students move through **Learning Stations** that are designed using the standards (both Common Core and Michigan standards), and are scaffolded to support learners at different levels. Learning Stations often include opportunities for students with varying learning styles to explore, learn and share using different manipulatives. Teachers work as facilitator of the learning stations while also spending time in targeted and focused instruction with small groups of students. In keeping with the Developmental Studies Center Model, students are able to move about the space, learn to manage their time and learning effectively and participate in hands-on, often collaborative, work. Older students are able to mentor younger students and interactions between learners are fluid. Unpacked standards lead to “I can” statements that students can understand. Students work collaboratively in small groups to accomplish tasks and work through the inquiry process by asking questions, making predictions, drawing conclusions and presenting their results. The teacher provides instruction, scaffolds learning, provides feedback, and motivates students to be engaged in their learning.

Through Learning Stations teachers and learners are able to:

- Be active participants in the learning process
- Explore student choice through student-driven learning
- Receive differentiated instruction
- Reinforce the BLS Mission: Individualized instruction, critical thinking, intellectual freedom

Students work on several standards-based projects throughout the school year. Branch Line subscribes to the Buck Institute for Learning definition of **Project Based Learning**: “Project Based Learning is a systematic teaching method that engages student in learning important knowledge and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills through an extended, student-influenced inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and learning tasks.” At BLS, teachers collaborate and prioritize cross-curriculum standards. Teachers create thematic projects based on the standards and student interest, and arrange resources. Next, teachers introduce project theme guidelines to the students. In the early grades, teachers develop and introduce the driving question to students. In the middle grades, there is collaboration amongst the teacher and the students in developing the driving question and topics of interest. In later grades, students develop a driving question and identify areas of interest with the topic.

The essential elements of Project Based Learning provided by the Buck Institute are:

- Significant Content
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills

- In-depth Inquiry
- Driving Questions
- Need to Know
- Voice and Choice
- Revision and Reflection
- Public Audience

Students will also actively participate in authentic and meaningful **Service Learning** projects. The projects will follow the Buck institute for Education essential elements and will promote community, civic engagement and personal responsibility. Project tools will include Planning Overview, Project Calendar and Project Rubrics.

4. The Educational Program outlines the approach(es) used to deliver the written curriculum in order to engage students in learning. The approaches reflect the beliefs of the PSA.

The Branch Line Educational Program is implemented using the following Teaching and Learning Tools:

**The Comprehensive Planning Guide:**

This serves as the written curriculum of the school. It provides shared documentation (between teachers and grade levels, between teachers and administration). It is continuously monitored for compliance with common core standards (Educational Goal #3). It remains a dynamic, guaranteed and viable curriculum in which essential current standards are mastered by the end of the program (Educational Goal #3). The Planning Guide is a teacher planning tool where teachers are able to continuously reflect and review, ensuring they are able to track content delivery and plan for instruction.

**Standards Mastery Checklist (Educational Goals 1, 3)**

The Mastery Checklist allows for individual student standards mastery progress monitoring. It remains electronically available to teachers and is constantly updated. It can be used as a progress report or report card. It is aligned to the comprehensive planning guide that houses the essential standards for all students. It can be used to drive formative assessments based on individual students and groups of students.

5. All students are provided the opportunity to attain knowledge and skills as indicated in the written curriculum and described by state and national standards, both in core and non-core subject areas.

**Individual Learning Plans (Educational Goals 1, 3, 4)**

All students are expected to make progress and attain the knowledge and skills outlined in the written curriculum. Individual Learning Plans allow for teacher and learner tracking of individual standards mastery. All students are working through an Individual Learning Plan. This plan provides a student benchmark and self-assessment of progress. It aids in student

goal setting. It guides the student and makes the teacher aware of the student's learning choices. It serves as a post assessment for the learner. It allows for a cooperative teaching and learning plan between the teacher and learner (Educational Goal 5). It aids in student reflection of learning and progress and reinforces the Developmental Studies Center Model.

- The Educational Program provides for adaptation and modification to meet the needs of all learners, e.g. exceptional students, students below grade level, students who qualify for special education services, English Language Learners.
  - Branch Line School is designed to meet the needs of all learners through a variety of structures. The classrooms are designed to allow students to move between classes to provide the opportunity for academic and social growth along a continuum with support from teachers, teacher assistants, and peers. Teachers provide differentiation for students below grade level, appropriate challenges for exceptional students, support for English Language Learners, and accommodations for students with special needs. Project and Service Based Learning also allows for a wide range of differentiation based on students' interests and abilities.
6. The PSA's assessments (e.g. summative and formative) used to ensure progress toward the mission and goals of the PSA are delineated.
- During the Fall, Winter, and Spring students are tested through the Measures for Academic Progress (MAP) nationally normed assessment. The teachers use the results to drive individualized lessons and communicate progress to parents and the Branch Line Board. Rubrics are being developed to match each project for guidelines on standards that should be mastered during the project. Students reading levels will be benchmarked three times a year. Teachers will meet to review and collaborate on analyzing data, identifying needs and using the data to drive instruction. Students are assessed formally and summatively through work at Learning Stations, through projects, during morning meeting, etc. Sample formative assessment occurs in the way of Learning Station work, project work, during morning meeting, etc.
7. A method of evaluation is used to determine effectiveness of the implementation, delivery, and support for the PSA's educational program.
- The Branch Line School leadership team, teaching staff, the Board Education Committee, with input from parents via Parent Connection Meetings and School Improvement, have begun to work together to conduct a thorough review of the educational program to ensure that the program envisioned is being delivered successfully. The process includes a cycle of three phases, followed by re-design as needed:
    - i. Phase I: Unpacking Programs and Initiatives
    - ii. Phase II: Implementation and Monitoring—Creation of Protocols
    - iii. Phase III: Educational Review and Evaluation
  - BLS has adopted the Danielson Teacher Evaluation for certified staff. The evaluation rubric is enhanced to include key elements outlined in the Branch Line School

Educational Program to ensure alignment and continuity between written and enacted curriculum. The staff will be formally evaluated twice a year along with consistent walk-throughs.

- The BLS teacher-led School Improvement Team has been developed to include parent input, collaboration, and data review. The team highlights the greatest areas of need based on data and strategies, and objectives can be leveraged to reach School Improvement goals.

**Key Question: Does the PSA’s Written Curriculum support high academic achievement for all students?**

**Area of Inquiry C:       Written Curriculum**

1. The Written Curriculum is consistent with the Educational Program set forth in the PSA contract. The Branch Line School written curriculum lives within the BLS Comprehensive Planning Guide for each cohort and content area. The tool is aligned to and consistent with the Educational Plan outlined in the charter contract.
2. The Written Curriculum demonstrates a logical sequence of learning standards aligned to state and national requirements.

**The Comprehensive Planning Guide:**

This serves as the written curriculum of the school. It provides shared documentation (between teachers and grade levels, between teachers and administration). It is continuously monitored for compliance with common core standards (Educational Goal #3). It remains a dynamic, guaranteed and viable curriculum in which essential current standards are mastered by the end of the program (Educational Goal #3). The Planning Guide is a teacher planning tool where teachers are able to continuously reflect and review, ensuring they are able to track content delivery and plan for instruction. The Comprehensive Planning Guide is based on the logical sequence of learning standards aligned to the following standards: Common Core ELA and Math standards, and the GLCES for both Science and Social Studies. Art, Music, and PE standards will be added when appropriate.

3. Instructional strategies are outlined.  
Instructional strategies are outlined in the BLS Comprehensive Planning Guide and are aligned with the mission, vision, and program outlined in the charter contract. See the Teacher Tools and Student Tools above.
4. Instructional resources and tools are outlined.  
Instructional resources and tools are outlined throughout the Comprehensive Planning Guide.
5. Essential vocabulary for each content area is provided.



Essential vocabulary for each content area is provided within the Comprehensive Planning Guide.

6. A variety of assessment methods are provided. Assessments both formative and summative are included in the Comprehensive Planning Guide. Projects and Service Learning Projects are also included.
7. The PSA's curriculum standards for students are communicated to staff, students, and parents.

Children learn most effectively when they are actively engaged in posing questions, discovering meaning, applying relevant skills and knowledge, and ultimately taking responsibility for their learning. By regularly providing standards mastery checklist updates, progress reports, report cards, conferences, presentations, etc., students, and parents receive communication regarding student progress.

**Health:** BLS will meet the state requirements for health education by integrating the Michigan Model for Health<sup>®</sup> (MM) curriculum objectives into the educational program. MM is a nationally recognized health education program for students in grades K-12 and provides integrated lessons that are an excellent fit for the BLS's project-based approach. Students will be assessed through rubrics.

**Physical Education:** Physical activity is a vital need for keeping students healthy, energetic, and engaged in their learning. BLS will integrate kinesthetic tools throughout the curriculum, creating a cooperative, rather than competitive approach to physical education. BLS plans to use SPARK PE, a respected curricula that is aligned with BLS goals and is differentiated, cooperative, evidence-based and comprehensive. Students will be assessed through individual performance and rubrics.

**Key Question: Does the PSA have processes for monitoring and reviewing the Written Curriculum to ensure high academic achievement for all students?**

**Area of Inquiry D: Review of Written Curriculum**

1. Evidence of ongoing review of the written curriculum is provided.
  - The staff meets continuously through the Fall and Spring to review the Comprehensive Planning Guide. Teams work collaboratively to review, reflect and revise, ensuring that the curriculum remains aligned to standards and the BLS Educational Program, but remains dynamic in approach based on needs of students and changes to the BLS environment. Evidence exists through the BLS Professional Development Plan and meeting agendas. Proposed changes to the curriculum are communicated to Building Leadership, who then in turn communicate proposed changes to the BLS Board and BLS families via BLS Connection Meetings.
2. Evidence of monitoring processes that ensure adequate delivery of the PSA's written curriculum is provided.

- Teachers are required to submit weekly lesson plans. Additional monitoring occurs through continuous walk-throughs, presentations of learning, and cohort and content team meetings.

**Key Question: Does instruction support high academic achievement for all students?**

**Area of Inquiry E: Instruction**

1. Instruction is consistent with the Educational Program.
  - Branch Line instruction is facilitated through Activity Learning, Project Based Learning, and Service Projects. Students are enabled and encouraged to follow interests and meet individual learning goals. Learning Stations, Project work and choices in Service projects provide the main methods of instructional delivery. Guided practice and whole group instruction will also occur but is not the main method of instructional delivery. Instruction is individualized and allows for learning that is driven by essential questions and ultimately tied to learning targets outlined in the adopted standards. A key component to our instructional delivery is the use of manipulatives. Through using hands-on materials, students are provided real-world instruction and are better able to visualize relevant concepts.
  
2. The purpose/objective of the lesson is shared with students.
  - Branch Line teachers are demonstrating and/or explaining the objective of the lesson (at beginning of lesson). Objectives, purpose and standards are clearly outlined at learning stations. Objectives are also outlined during Morning Meeting. The learning targets will be clearly displayed in the classroom for students to see and refer back to. In project work, learning targets, standards, objectives, driving questions and key learning are communicated to students.
  
3. Instruction utilizes research-based instructional strategies and methodologies consistent with the Educational Program.
  - Targeted and focused instruction occurs during Activity Learning and throughout the PBL process. This methodology is supported in the research on key indicators of high performing schools. Our PBL curriculum allows children to continue “digging” and to research on a deeper level with extended project learning experiences. This method allows more time and a deeper level of knowledge retention. Research supporting the methods and procedures followed at Branch Line School are included below.
  
  - Branch Line teachers encourage and instruct students to manage their personal pace during project time, group work and at Learning Stations. This pace supports students’ engagement and deeper level learning.

- Branch Line teachers model lessons/ideas that exemplify the “Branch Line Ways of Thinking.” Branch Line believes that an instructor’s role is to guide students with questioning and encouragement in order to provide critical thinking skills. This allows students to not only retain the knowledge but, more importantly, learn how to ask questions, research, and investigate.
  - Teachers provide targeted and focused mini-lessons in areas needing direct instruction when it is identified that students do not have prior knowledge or deep enough knowledge in order to successfully navigate the given activity or project.
4. Instruction is engaging and emphasizes high-level thinking skills.
    - Branch Line students work in groups, small and large, age-level and multi-age, to collaborate on projects and activities. The BLS system is highly engaging.
  5. Instruction is rigorous and prepares students for meeting standards.
    - Branch Line students will master the standards through direct instruction, Activity Learning and hands on Project Based Learning. We emphasize “learning by doing” and recognize research that proves application is a stronger form of students’ knowledge retention. High expectations, standards mastery focus, and individualized tracking of student progress help to ensure rigor.
  6. Instruction is adapted and/or modified to meet the needs of all learners, e.g., exceptional students, students below grade level, students who qualify for special education services, English Language Learners.
    - Teachers differentiate lessons and take into account the various learning styles of students.
    - Students can easily transition through classroom levels based on their current needs. This is particularly advantageous to our students emotionally and socially, as they are not pointed-out during these transition periods.
    - The BLS Instructional Support Team (IST) meets regularly to review student needs, brainstorm strategies, provide holistic support for any and all struggling students.
    - Necessary accommodations and modifications are made for all students qualifying for special education services. Teachers receive an “IEP at a Glance” on any qualifying student with suggestions for modifications and accommodations for a given child’s disability or challenge.
    - Up-to-date and compliant 504 programming occurs at Branch Line School.
  7. Assessment data is utilized to guide classroom instruction.

- MAP Assessment results are analyzed and data is used to inform individualized learning plans, drive instruction and support the curriculum review process.
- Formative assessment is on-going in each classroom throughout the Activity Learning process.
- Standards-based Project rubrics are developed that align with the BLS written curriculum (Comprehensive Planning Guide).
- Project based standards and skills mastery is assessed as students demonstrate their learning during their presentations of learning. Depending on the project, presentations happen throughout or at the completion of a project cycle.

8. Instruction is aligned to the Written Curriculum.

- All instruction is aligned to the written curriculum. Teachers are required to submit lesson plans and will have monthly team meetings to continue to expand on their lessons and instructional strategies in the classroom. Instruction includes the integration of cross-content projects and activities that aim to be authentic and will often allow students to focus on service to the community.

**Research to support curriculum and instruction:**

**Content Area Standards:**

<http://www.corestandards.org/>

[http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-28753\\_38684---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-28753_38684---,00.html)

<http://www.nextgenscience.org/>

**ELA Instruction:**

Fountas, I and Pinell, G.S. (2010). *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK-8, Second Edition: A Guide to Teaching*. Heinemann. SBN-10: 032502880X

Pinnell, Gay Su. (1998). *Word Matters: Teaching Phonics and Spelling in the reading/writing Classroom*. Heinemann. ISBN: 9780325000510

**Math Instruction:**

<http://www.hand2mind.com/programs/hands-onlearning>

<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/content/cntareas/math/ma300.htm>

**Fostering Independent Learning, Differentiation, and Deep Thinking:**

Boushey, G and Moser J. (2014). *The Daily 5*. Markham, Ontario: Stenhouse. ISBN: 978-1-57110-974-3.

McTighe, J and Wiggins, G. (2014). Essential Questions. Alexandria, VA: ASCD. ISBN: 978-1-4166-1505-7.

Tomlinson, Carol Ann. (2003). Fulfilling the Promise of the Differentiated Classroom. Alexandria, VA: ASCD. ISBN: 978-0-87120-812-5.

- Multi-aged student groupings

<https://amesces.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/grade-span-configurations-what-should-we-do-with-children-jan-2006.pdf>

<http://www.ausdk12.org/ourpages/auto/2013/5/2/31844865/Grade%20Span%20-%20What%20should%20we%20do%20with%20children.pdf>

- Project Based Learning

[http://bie.org/object/document/research\\_summary\\_on\\_the\\_benefits\\_of\\_pbl](http://bie.org/object/document/research_summary_on_the_benefits_of_pbl)

<http://www.teachthought.com/learning/project-based-learning/difference-between-projects-and-project-based-learning/>

**Key Question: Does PSA have a process for monitoring and reviewing instructional planning?**

**Area of Inquiry F: Review of Instructional Planning**

1. Evidence of implementation of instructional planning processes to ensure delivery of the written curriculum.
  - Teachers plan the courses of study, projects, and service projects both individually and in collaborative teams. Plans include: standards, rubrics, planning guide, resources, assessments, key vocabulary, and driving questions for grades K-8.
  - Throughout the school year an instructional lead rotates through classrooms to complete walk-through observations, assess instruction, gauge student interactions, provide reflection/room for growth for teaching staff, and monitor behavior management.
  - Teachers are required to submit lesson plans throughout the school year to the instructional lead for review to ensure that enacted curriculum is aligned to the written curriculum.
2. Evidence of monitoring processes to ensure effective instructional planning is provided.
  - Staff meetings rotate on a weekly basis. Teachers are given time to reflect, plan and work on the Comprehensive Planning Guide with the instructional lead and curriculum support team members to incorporate best practices and to ensure curriculum is properly delivered.

- Teachers are given additional planning periods throughout the week to plan, discuss, and reflect on the curriculum process and adjust enacted curriculum to ensure alignment with written curriculum.
- Teaching and staff members are in constant communication with the Instructional Lead. Weekly lesson plans are used to drive the walk-through process. Teachers are given reflections on strengths and suggestions for improvement.
- Agendas and protected meeting times ensure that effective planning is focused, supported and encouraged.
- Accountability exists through the school improvement process. Teachers meet at regularly scheduled times to ensure that the school is on a trajectory consistent with School Improvement academic and cultural goals. Using the MDE “continuous improvement process of “Gather, Plan, Do, Review” the team consistently asks the question, “What is working? What is not? Why are there gaps? How do we need to adjust to ensure improvement?”

**Key Question: Does the PSA use assessments effectively to ensure high academic achievement for all students?**

**Area of Inquiry G:      Assessment**

1. Classroom assessments are consistent with the Educational Program.  
Formative and summative assessments are implemented in the classroom to ensure standards mastery and progress monitoring. All are aligned with the Branch Line Educational Program.
2. Classroom assessments are aligned with the written curriculum and instruction.
  - Assessment at Branch Line School has been designed for the purpose of empowering students to engage in significant self-assessment and be active participants in their learning, giving teachers the requisite time and tools to provide thoughtful and timely feedback, providing deliberate and genuine differentiation, creating meaningful evaluations leading to content knowledge mastery for each student, and generating data that accurately reflects the state of student learning. On-going assessment occurs daily as students move through Activity Learning stations, work with teachers and or teacher assistants in targeted/focused learning groups. Individual benchmarking occurs through the implementation of BLS Teacher and Student Learning Tools. Standards mastery is captured for each student in a teacher’s classroom in the Standards Mastery Checklist.
  - **Project Rubrics** delineating individual benchmarks are created and continually aggregated for purposes of meaningfully informing individual curriculum, instruction, and project design. Students will work through each content area at their individual pace, with learning progressing from beginning to mastery; benchmarking allows teachers to quickly identify and address areas of particular strengths and weaknesses for students, classrooms, and the school.

- **Standardized Tests:** Branch Line School will administer the MAP assessment by Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) each fall, winter, and spring. Branch Line School will utilize the data provided to measure student growth per school year, as well as year to year and throughout each student’s academic career. Branch Line School will be able to measure individual student achievement of topic mastery from the RIT scale provided with MAP assessment scores. Branch Line School will also administer the state test as prescribed by the State of Michigan.
- 3. Assessment results are used to inform curriculum and instruction and to improve student learning.
  - The BLS teaching staff and Leadership monitor state mandated test scores, project results and other benchmark assessments to closely monitor standards mastery and proficiency. Norm-referenced assessment data is shared with parents, students and the BLS Board of Directors tri-annually. Data gathered from school assessments are used to drive targeted and focused instruction as well as inform the project planning process to ensure individual student needs are met. The MAP assessment is used to inform School Improvement Objectives.
- 4. Assessment results are used to identify student needs and design interventions to improve individual student performance.
  - Formative and classroom summative assessment data is used continuously to identify individual student needs and make adjustments to classroom instruction. The leadership team and BLS instructional staff reviews normed data tri-annually to ensure students are on a positive growth trajectory toward proficiency and mastery. Where adjustments need to be made, they are made immediately.
- 5. Student assessment results are reported to the PSA’s Board, staff, students, and parents.
  - MAP assessment results are reported and made known to the board, staff, students, and parents. A standards-based report card sent home on a trimester basis, along with conferences. Parents have an opportunity to meet individual instructors and the Instructional Leader on an as needed basis. Parents are provided instructional sheets to further interpret standardized testing and an overview of the standards-based report card.

**Standard II: Leadership Support of the Educational Program**

**Key Question: Does leadership promote and support the academic achievement of all students?**

**Area of Inquiry A: Leadership**

1. Leadership oversees the implementation of the Educational Program.
  - A Branch Line Instructional Lead drives the implementation of the instructional program at Branch Line School. The Instructional Lead is in possession of a State of Michigan administrative credential, teaching certificate, and teaching experience.

The administrator completes walk-throughs of classrooms, models lessons when necessary, monitors lesson plans and enacted curriculum alignment with written curriculum. The administrator will also oversee any coaching that may need to occur with teachers that are struggling.

2. Leadership monitors academic performance and progress.
  - The Instructional Lead monitors state test scores, benchmark-reading assessments, MAP testing as well as project rubrics. The BLS staff along with the Instructional Lead, review the data to help further inform instruction.
3. Leadership uses student achievement data to inform school improvement.
  - Formative and summative data are monitored constantly at Branch Line School so that adjustments to teaching and programs can be made. With the support of the Instructional Lead, staff review norm-referenced data tri-annually so adjustments can be made to ensure student growth individually and across grade/cohort levels. School Improvement goals, objectives and strategies are driven by achievement data. Strategies and budget in the School Improvement process are driven by needs presented in the data. This enables the Leadership and instructional staff to make informed decisions that square with improvement planning, the Educational Program and the documented needs of the students.
4. Leadership monitors implementation and effectiveness of the School Improvement Plan and Professional Development Plan.
  - School Improvement and Professional Development planning are related. Suggested and implemented Professional Development reflects the Educational Program of BLS along with documented, data-based needs outlined in the School Improvement Plan. A teacher chairs the BLS School Improvement Team. The Instructional Lead is charged with ensuring that the SIP process is implemented, continuous and effective. Though the BLS Professional Development Plan is created each spring for the following year based on strategies and data, it is a dynamic document that will adjust as needs emerge in the school year.

**Key Question: Does the School Improvement Plan and planning processes promote and support academic achievement for all students?**

**Area of Inquiry B: School Improvement**

1. The School Improvement planning process involves all required stakeholders.
  - The BLS School Improvement Team includes teachers, leaders, and parents. Meetings are conducted throughout the year to look at student academic data and the instructional program at Branch Line School. The BLS SIP is also summarized in a document referred to as “The Branch Line Ways of Thinking.” This document is



shared continuously with parents, Board, and staff, as well as prospective families. It provides an overview of the mission, vision, and educational underpinning of the school.

2. The School Improvement Plan includes goals based on current student academic data.
  - Student academic data considered in the School Improvement Planning process includes but is not limited to: State mandated testing, MAP data, reading benchmarks, project outcomes and learning data.
3. School Improvement goals and strategies assist the school in achieving measurable progress toward high student achievement.
  - The BLS School Improvement Plan goals reflect the academic needs of the school based on classroom and norm-referenced data. The BLS School Improvement Team works on developing/vetting strategies to assist the school in achieving measurable progress toward high student achievement.

### **Research to Support the BLS Process for School Improvement**

MDE School Improvement Framework

[http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-28753\\_38959---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-28753_38959---,00.html)

The benchmarked indicators of effective schools detailed in the Solution Tree publication, High Performing School (<http://www.solution-tree.com/free-resources/schoolimprovement/hps>)

Robert Marzano's Levels of School Effectiveness

(<http://legisweb.state.wy.us/InterimCommittee/2012/Z02MarzanoLevels.pdf>)

The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement

(<http://www.centerforcsri.org>)

**Key Question: Does the PSA's Professional Development Plan align with the Educational Program and the School Improvement Plans?**

#### **Area of Inquiry C: Professional Development**

1. The Professional Development Plan is based on and aligned to the needs of the students and staff.
  - The BLS Professional Development Plan focuses primarily on on-site PD both at the beginning of the year and throughout the year. The small nature of the school lends

itself to professional development that is “high-touch” and “high-support.” A personalized school requires a personalized professional development plan that is calibrated to the growth needs of staff and the learning outcomes of students.

2. The Professional Development Plan aligns to the Educational Program, the Written Curriculum and School Improvement Plan.
  - The focus of Branch Line PD is on embedded support for teachers around key educational programmatic elements: Activity Learning, Project Based Learning, standards-based reporting, data driven decision making, differentiation, scaffolding of standards and individualized instruction. All of the above PD are aligned to the Educational Program, are found woven throughout the written curriculum (Comprehensive Planning Guide) and are supported by BLS School Improvement Goals and Strategies.