Definition of Common Terms

Benchmarks: A detailed description of a specific level of student achievement expected of students at particular ages, grades, or developmental levels; academic goals set for each grade level.

Collaborative Learning or **Cooperative Learning:** An instructional approach in which students of varying abilities and interests work together in small groups to solve a problem, complete a project, or achieve a common goal.

Constructivism: Theory suggesting that students learn by constructing their own knowledge, especially through hands-on exploration. It emphasizes that the context in which an idea is presented, as well as student attitude and behavior, affects learning. Students learn by incorporating new information into what they already know.

Data-Driven Decision Making: A process of making decisions about curriculum and instruction based on the analysis of classroom data and standardized test data. Data-driven decision making uses data on function, quantity and quality of inputs, and how students learn to suggest educational solutions.

Differentiated Instruction: This is also referred to as "individualized" or "customized" instruction. Students are offered several different learning experiences within one lesson to meet varied needs or learning styles.

Disaggregated Data: The presentation of data broken into segments of the student population instead of the entire enrollment. Typical segments include students who are economically disadvantaged, from racial or ethnic minority groups, have disabilities, or have limited English fluency. Disaggregated data allows parents and teachers to see how each student group is performing in a school.

Formative Assessment: Any form of assessment used by an educator to evaluate students' knowledge and understanding of particular content and then to adjust instructional practices accordingly toward improving student achievement in that area. It is the assessment **for learning.**

Higher-Order Questions: Questions that require thinking and reflection rather than single-solution responses.

Higher-Order Thinking Skills: Understanding complex concepts and applying sometimes conflicting information to solve a problem, which may have more than one correct answer.

Integrated Curriculum: Refers to the practice of using a single theme to teach a variety of subjects. It also refers to a interdisciplinary curriculum, which combines several school subjects into one project.

Learning Framework: An intentional design for quality learning, centered on research-based principles. Components of the Framework include: Learning Targets, Assessment, and Instructional Elements and Strategies.

Model Curriculum: Provided by the Department of Education to assist all districts and schools with implementation of the Common Core State Standards and NJ common Core Curriculum Content Standards.

Modeling: Demonstrating to the learner how to do a task, with the expectation that the learner can copy the model. Modeling often involves thinking aloud or talking about how to work through a task.

Open-Ended Question: A question that has many avenues of access and allows students to respond in a variety of ways. Such questions have more than one correct answer.

Open-Response Task: A performance task in which students are required to generate an answer rather than select an answer from among several possible answers, but there is a single correct response

PARCC: Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career. A consortium of 23 states and Washington, DC working together to deliver a common set of k-12 assessments in Language Arts and Mathematics aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

Performance Assessment: Systematic and direct observation of a student performance or examples of student performances and ranking according to pre-established performance criteria. Students are assessed on the result as well as the process engaged in a complex task or creation of a product

Performance Task: An assessment exercise that is goal directed. The exercise is developed to elicit students' application of a wide range of skills and knowledge to solve a complex problem

Portfolio: A collection of various samples of a student's work throughout the school year that can include writing samples, examples of math problems, evidence of reading and student responses, results of science experiments.

Problem Solving: A method of learning in which students evaluate their thinking and progress while solving problems. The process includes strategy discussion--determining solution strategies to similar problems and pinpointing additional problems within the context of their investigation.

Rubric: Refers to a grading or scoring system. A rubric is a scoring tool that lists the criteria to be met in a piece of work. A rubric also describes levels of quality for each of the criteria. These levels of performance may be written as different ratings (e.g., Excellent, Good, Needs Improvement) or as numerical scores (e.g., 4, 3, 2, 1).

Scaffolding: An instructional technique in which the teacher breaks a complex task into smaller tasks, models the desired learning strategy or task, provides support as students learn to do the task, and then

gradually shifts responsibility to the students. In this manner, a teacher enables students to accomplish as much of a task as possible without adult assistance

Scientifically based research: Research that involves the application of rigorous, systemic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to educational activities and programs

Summative Assessment: refers to the assessment of the learning and summarizes the development of learners at a particular time. It is the assessment **of learning.**

Thematic Units: A unit of study that has lessons focused on a specific theme, sometimes covering all core subject areas. It is often used as an alternative approach to teaching history or social studies chronologically

Zone of Proximal Development: A level or range in which a student can perform a task with help