

U.S. Department of Education
2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [] Title I [] Charter [X] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Mrs. Jennifer Harris

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Cory Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1550 South Steele Street

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Denver State CO Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 80210-2938

County Denver County

Telephone (720) 424-8380 Fax _____

Web site/URL http://cory.dpsk12.org/ E-mail jennifer_harris@dpsk12.org

Facebook Page
Twitter Handle _____ https://www.facebook.com/coryelementary Google+ _____

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____ Other Social Media Link _____

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mrs. Susana Cordova E-mail superintendent@dpsk12.org

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Denver Public Schools Tel. (720) 423-3054

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mrs. Anne Rowe

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

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

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 118 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 50 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 59 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 227 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - Suburban
 - Small city or town in a rural area
 - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	39	45	84
2	32	46	78
3	38	38	76
4	35	34	69
5	42	33	75
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	186	196	382

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 4 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 9 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 79 % White
 - 7 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 4%

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	7
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	8
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	15
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	382
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.039
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 8%
45 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Spanish, Dutch, Arabic, Vietnamese, Swedish, Russian, Japanese, Laotian, Persian, Slovak, French, Thai, West Central Oromo

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 13%
Total number students who qualify: 51

8. Students receiving special education services: 5%
20 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- 2 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 1 Multiple Disabilities
- 3 Orthopedic Impairment
- 2 Other Health Impaired
- 7 Specific Learning Disability
- 4 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 1 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	15
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	8
Paraprofessionals	10
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 25:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	97%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

We achieve excellence through a partnership with our community, families, students and staff. We provide a safe and positive environment that fosters a love of learning.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

Cory is an Highly Gifted and Talented Magnet School (HGT). Students are given priority in the Denver Public Schools Choice Process if they have been identified as meeting the HGT qualifications and will be accepted based on the number of choice seats that are opened.

PART III – SUMMARY

Cory Elementary is located in the southeast neighborhood of Cory-Merrill in Denver, Colorado. Currently we serve 382 students at the first through fifth grade level. Traditionally, Cory has had a small percentage of free and reduced lunch students; we currently have 13.4%. Cory is a gifted and talented magnet school.

Twenty percent of our students are identified as gifted and talented or highly gifted and talented. Our school population is predominantly caucasian, with a small percentage of other ethnicities represented within the student body. Denver Public Schools is a ‘choice’ district, allowing for children from all neighborhoods to choose to come to Cory, with seats offered through a lottery system. Cory typically serves a fairly equal balance of students from the neighborhood, the choice list, and identified gifted and highly gifted students.

Cory was built in 1952 and is named after John J. Cory, a prominent DPS alum and educator who spent his career in Denver Public Schools. The building itself was designed by Victor Hornbein and is listed as a Historic Denver Landmark. Between 1970 and 1995, Cory was part of the court-ordered racial desegregation mandate that required extensive busing within the district. In 1995, Cory again became a neighborhood school when the busing mandate was lifted.

Cory is a magnet site for highly gifted and talented (HGT) students. Every teacher at Cory has been endorsed in gifted education and the HGT students are integrated into each classroom. Our approach is what makes Cory unique: each classroom contains a spectrum of learners, providing an enriched learning environment for all students. This approach is one factor that designates Cory Elementary as a “Distinguished” Denver Public School serving neighborhood, choice and highly gifted children.

School traditions around both the arts and the curriculum play a large part in what makes Cory such a special place. Every year, first graders perform in an “opera” based on a fairy tale. Each student has a part to play, and the children rehearse for many weeks in order to perform for their families on a special opera night. In addition, in the upper grades, Cory students voluntarily perform in the Denver Public Schools Shakespeare Festival. In preparation for the festival, fourth and fifth grade teachers lead a Shakespeare unit of study with the students. Additionally, our school participates in a Young Authors contest every year. Students are invited to submit an original story, and a group of staff reads through them and chooses grade level winners. Those selected participated in a school celebration. One primary and one intermediate winner then go on to a district celebration. Also, the school year ends each year with a school-wide outdoor concert called Concert on the Green. Mini-society is an economic unit of study that every student participates in during either 4th or 5th grade. Groups of students design and produce a product, market it, and sell it to their classmates during a market day. Our partnership with Junior Achievement supports this exploration of personal finance concepts. Each year, we have “JA in a Day” during which community volunteers lead lessons and activities designed to teach students about jobs, community roles, and economic concepts like banking, taxes, and wage earning. Finally, Reading Picnics are a highlight for students in grades 1-3. Twice a year, these classes take a walking field trip to a nearby park. Throughout the day, the students alternate between free play in the park and reading under the trees. Many parents and siblings attend these picnics and experience the emphasis we place on both activity and literacy.

At Cory, we strive to educate the whole child. To that end, we utilize many different strategies to meet not only the academic needs of our students, but the social/emotional needs of our students as well. From first through fifth grade, students participate in leveled lessons designed to support their emotional intelligence. Students have many opportunities for individual recognition: Principal’s Stars, PBIS behavior rewards, and Class Dojo. In addition to daily differentiation in the classroom, students can participate in extracurricular book clubs, Semantics club, and many after school enrichment clubs.

Cory also engages the parent community as well as the surrounding Denver community. Students engage with the local community through yearly participation in philanthropic programs such as Penny Harvest (social justice related) and Jump Rope for Heart (heart disease). Our school values parental involvement, and to that end we hold multiple parent education evenings such as Science Night, Literacy Night, and Math Night. We also cultivate the parent/teacher relationship through events like the ‘Meet Your Teacher’

popsicle party during the first week of school. Finally, we have a very active PTA and more than a 100 parent volunteers are recognized each year.

Parents of English Language Acquisition students make up a Parent Advisory Committee that meets twice yearly to represent the needs and issues of these students. Engaging these parents provides our staff with insight into a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The core English language arts curriculum is based on reading complex texts, reading for knowledge, student discourse, and students supporting their thinking with evidence from the text. Small group differentiated instruction to challenge our students to use critical thinking skills is also a key component of our English Language Arts curriculum. The lessons consist of teacher modeling, teacher think aloud, guided practice, and independent practice. During the independent practice time students read rigorous texts at their differentiated instructional level that include relevant informational texts and high quality literature. Also during independent practice teachers meet with small groups and/or individual students to provide differentiated and targeted instruction and conferencing. The lessons typically close with students reflecting on their learning and sharing and celebrating their work. Incorporated into the lessons is a focus on speaking and listening skills that help to strengthen students on their path to college and career readiness. For example, in the primary grades, students learn and practice using a concentric circle format to describe, ask questions, acknowledge different points of view, use information, and possibly change thinking to comprehend a wide variety of texts, while also learning how to respectfully disagree. In the intermediate grades, during the independent practice time, students participate in rigorous and differentiated guided reading group. Students read high quality literature such as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, or *Bud, Not Buddy*, answer text-based questions about those novels, and meet once a week to discuss the novel. During these discussions students use accountable talk to challenge and build on each other's thinking, thus coming to a deeper understanding of the novels and how the novels reflect the human experience. Since all teachers are GT endorsed, teachers have some flexibility to supplement core curricula with materials and creative ideas such as project-based learning. This choice helps meet the needs of various learners.

In terms of mathematics, many different genres are included in the curriculum, which is built upon the Common Core State Standards. We utilize the EngageNY Curriculum to support the standards. The EngageNY curriculum is rigorous and asks more from our students, both in conceptual knowledge, and in the application of their learning in the problems that students are asked to do. It also focuses on attending to precision (one of the Standards of Mathematical Practices), which is an area where we find most students need assistance with developing more strategies to utilize. There are many opportunities for differentiated learning, such as regrouping students for specific abilities and understanding how our students learn best. Extra supports may include people, technology, materials, or projects. We also use math notebooks to help ensure students can write across content areas and are prepared for rigorous math outside the school setting, particularly in the area of problem solving and real-world application problems. Regular teacher-to-teacher communications help to ensure that our curriculum meets the needs of students across grade levels. Data is consistently analyzed to identify areas of strength and weakness and plan for future high quality learning. There is weekly or daily homework that always has an optional component to help push students in their critical thinking skills. Teachers also ensure that appropriate math vocabulary and academic language is being taught and used by the students. Enrichment and re-teaching opportunities align closely with individual student learning in the classroom. Enrichment opportunities include previewing concepts, Zaccaro's Challenge Math, Zearn, Miquon Math, Khan Academy, Front Row and project based learning. We are constantly teaching students how to become problem solvers and critical thinkers, providing us the opportunity to bring in supplemental activities.

The science and social studies curriculum is engaging and student centered. There is a school-wide science fair that is a huge success and widely loved by all. After putting a project of choice together, students then present in front of their peers. Based on presentation skills, after displaying at a school level, students are then chosen for competition at a district level. In order to integrate literacy skills into each content area, students use science notebooks much like they do in math. Students back up ideas with claims and evidence and are constantly testing the proof behind theories through the use of experiments and research. There is district curriculum, plus teachers have the flexibility to supplement by using tracks materials and project-based learning. With some of the rich history, culture, access to nature in Colorado and museums, field trips and outside resources are also used to supplement learning and interest.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

“Specials classes are really fun because you learn new things and the classes are active and teach you things you can do back at home and show your parents.” Alex, 1st grade

Cory offers a variety of enriching curricular subjects outside of the daily classroom. All first through fifth grade students partake in visual arts, physical education, library and technology, and general music. Students visit visual arts, physical education and music on a three-day rotation, for 50 minutes each time. They visit the library and technology lab once a week and sometimes more frequently for collaborative projects between the classroom teacher and teacher librarian. These opportunities ensure the development of the whole child and provide an enriching elementary education experience.

Visual Art lessons are aligned with Denver Public Schools curriculum and Colorado Visual Arts and Common Core Standards. Students have a hands-on experience with a wide variety of media; for example, drawing and painting, printmaking, ceramics, and sculpture. Projects are designed to embrace higher order thinking and rigor in the arts and are differentiated to meet the needs of all students and include studies of other cultures. Special units may include assemblage sculpture, reduction prints, and art history. Students are taught to understand and respond to works of art, including their own. They learn to use the language and vocabulary of visual arts. Throughout the school year, selected student artists will participate in the DPS District Art Show at the Denver Art Museum, as well as art displays here at Cory. These shows provide students with an opportunity for artwork to be displayed in a professional manner. Students have great pride in sharing their talent and abilities with other students, families, and the community. Each year Cory artists participate in the Janus Funds “Artrepreneur” program, in which a team of students attend the Cherry Creek Arts Festival and purchase a piece of art for the school’s permanent collection. Research shows that involvement in the arts is associated with gains in math, reading, cognitive ability, critical thinking, and verbal skill. Arts learning can also improve motivation, concentration, confidence, and teamwork.

The Physical Education program at Cory Elementary incorporates a movement-based philosophy designed to engage all students in moderate to vigorous physical activity during each PE class. Our goal is to encourage students to lead a healthy and active lifestyle by identifying activities that they can participate in throughout their entire life. Our program also encourages students to develop strong interpersonal skills and teamwork skills as they work together and individually. We introduce several team and individual sports and the component skills necessary to engage in those sports. Finally, we introduce and learn about the health related components of fitness and ways to develop individual plans for fitness and overall well being.

Information literacy is an extremely important part of our world today. Our library and technology program at Cory is centered around teaching our students the twenty-first century information literacy standards. These standards promote learners to question, think critically and gain new knowledge through a variety of sources. They are then expected to use their knowledge in new situations as well as in a variety of formats. Therefore, in the library and technology lab, students often conduct research using books, online databases and the Internet. They learn to conduct keyword searches and think about whether a website is credible and accurate. Students also produce their findings in a variety of formats; e.g., word processing, use of web 2.0 tools, creating videos, Google Drive applications, etc. Library time also consists of a weekly book checkout and an optional weekly book club that is held twice a year for grades 2nd through 5th.

In music class at Cory Elementary, all grade levels use a variety of singing, movement, and instrumental activities and explorations to enhance their music experience. We work with various activities to explore the elements of music (rhythm, melody, harmony, timbre, form, and texture, just to name a few). Students gain experiences singing (which includes the use of solfege) and instrument play using Orff instruments (xylophones, metallophones, and glockenspiels), as well as unpitched percussion instruments, and recorders (3rd-5th grade). Lessons are crafted by the teacher based on grade-level content outlined in both the Colorado State standards and National Music Standards. In addition to musical concepts, general music naturally lends itself to lessons in collaboration, creativity, literacy, mathematics, and world history. Specials are a core part of Cory’s culture and community and are a highlight of students’ days.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Due to Cory being an HGT Integrated Magnet school (see section on Indicators of Academic Success for details of this model), teachers differentiate their instruction and focus on using gifted teaching strategies in their teaching so that students at all academic levels can benefit. Every student at Cory is challenged in their areas of strength and supported in areas where they need more support.

Student supports and interventions are offered for any child that is struggling academically, behaviorally, or emotionally, whether they need a temporary plan or permanent plan to ensure their academic and/or emotional success. Supports can include English Language Acquisition (ELA) groups, literacy intervention groups, math intervention groups, and/or social-emotional skill building individual/group interventions. Students are identified most often through our Student Intervention Dialogs that are held once every six weeks with teachers and support staff. If students continue to struggle after receiving interventions for at least 6 weeks, the school may invite the parent or guardian in for a Student Support Team (SST) meeting. This team is made up of teachers, support staff, the principal and parents, and the purpose is to problem-solve and determine the best ways to support the student at school. This process is referred to as Response to Intervention (RTI) which is part of a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) model. Additional supports may be accessed in this model by students with disabilities through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a Section 504 Plan.

In addition to the above supports, there are three enrichment opportunities during the instructional day that are open to any interested student. The Stock Market Club is a virtual stock market club experience in which student groups invest in stocks on a virtual market and learn about the basics of economics. In our Semantics Club, students learn about words and take part in the district, city and state spelling bees for the National Scripps Spelling Bee. After competition, this enrichment continues to meet for students to continue practicing words from the many different languages that influence the English language. We currently have one student at Cory who is advancing to state from this year's competitions. Finally, students in 2nd - 5th grade are also invited to join a lunchtime book club. Our teacher librarian runs the club during which students discuss different books and engage in activities related to the chosen book.

4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

Cory Elementary is the second highest performing school in our large urban school district and our use of assessment data to analyze and improve student and school performance is one critical area that allows us to maintain this high level of achievement. Grade level teams meet once a week to examine a variety of assessment data from summative assessments, to formative student work, to standardized tests, to even video of student discourse. During these meetings, called Data Driven Instruction (DDI), teachers follow a protocol where they examine a teacher exemplar response, a student exemplar response and then collaborate to identify gaps in student learning. That is, what are the highest leverage misconceptions/errors to fix that will move all students closer to the level of the teacher and student exemplars. Once the misconceptions are described teachers collaborate to plan the reteach instructional moves and/or create resources to address the misconception. There are two critical components to planning the reteach instructional moves: they are based on existing lesson structures and the instruction is scheduled and the follow up data to be collected is determined. Basing the reteach instructional moves on existing lesson structures the teaching to address the misconception is targeted and based on what is already working in the classroom. This means that teachers do not have to reinvent their instruction methods to address the misconception and can build the reteach on strengths. Scheduling the reteach and the follow up data to be collected ensures the instruction will happen in a timely manner and focuses the data to be collected to test the efficacy of the reteach. The final piece of the protocol is to practice. Yes, we actually practice with our colleagues the instruction. While fun, if not a bit awkward, practicing allows the teachers to role play the lesson so that any glitches in the reteach can be addressed.

In regards to informing parents on student achievement, there are many formal and informal opportunities throughout the year. Formally, parents are made aware at our annual Collaborative School Committee Fall Forum, where the school leader goes through an in-depth presentation on the Standardized Testing (summative) results and works with our CSC on creating action steps for improvement. Informally, teachers

utilize various strategies for formative assessment both in the classroom (all grade levels) and through interim assessments (in grades 3-5). Parents are made aware of these results through Parent Teacher Conferences in the fall and spring (when appropriate). Since formative assessments are used to guide daily instruction, parents are often made aware through their child's Standards Based Report Card regarding their current status in reaching end of year goals for the grade level standards.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

“At Cory we love learning and laughter. We grow by trying new things and learning from our mistakes. We embrace challenges with the courage to do our best, we persevere. We show respect for our community through caring responsible actions. We celebrate each other's' differences and accomplishments.”~Cory Creed

Our creed is our mission. We integrate it into our daily instruction, our problem-solving techniques, our events, our staffing, and our community outreach. It guides our choices, provides insight, and proffers tools for this expedition called scholarship. It is our teacher.

We love learning and laughter. We begin every school year dedicated to getting to know the kids. We delve into their interests and align content they can connect with. For instance, our teachers consistently adjust lessons and instruction to include real world examples that interest and engage students. We demonstrate our own enthusiasm with classroom environments that reflect our personalities. We prioritize active inquiry by promoting growth mindset.

We grow by trying new things and learning from our mistakes. In 2015-2016 we piloted new literacy and math curricula, providing feedback within our own school as well as to the curriculum developers. We utilize new trends in technology such as green screens, Promethean Boards, Google Classroom. That said, we scrutinize effectiveness and adapt accordingly. We absorb, ratify, and share what works well. We change, rectify, and share what doesn't work well. In any and every case, we share.

We embrace challenges with the courage to do our best. We persevere. We are ignited by our quest to grapple. We recognize the productivity of tribulation. This spirit of taking the bull by the horns buttresses our determination.

We show respect for our community through caring responsible actions. Safety is paramount. The physical and emotional health of our student body takes precedence. We nurture an imperative concern for one another. We set aside class time to address concerns, role play practicable scenarios, and coach research based conflict resolution strategies. Furthermore, as a school we undertake several community service projects annually. These projects are designed and directed by our student representatives.

We celebrate each others differences and accomplishments. Our strength and effectiveness comes from a vast conglomeration of hodge-podge backgrounds, viewpoints, and preferences. We are ardent in our commitment to the manifold contributions of each and every stakeholder. We seek to determine optimal conditions for learning. We embolden stamina by accommodating unique preferences. We furnish a variety of avenues for demonstration of knowledge in our classroom communities, as well as our faculty teams.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

At Cory we not only appreciate our diverse community, we embrace it! Every year we aim to establish and nurture strong relationships with various community members by providing opportunities for involvement that bridge a comprehensive array of interests with flexible scheduling. The partnership we have with our community is our most tremendous asset. We confer and meet with parents throughout the year in order to align our goals for individual students. We are extraordinarily creative when it comes to meeting the unique needs of each learner, and we boost the success of our teaching strategies by collaborating with the people who know them best; their families. We truly honor this alliance. Furthermore, we invite all of the branches of the Cory tree to the schoolhouse. We have had expert speakers, treasured volunteers, and lively party planners partner with us in the classrooms.

Our Collaborative School Committee (CSC) is a panel of family, staff, and neighborhood community

members. This group meets regularly to knuckle down on the operational workings of our learning institution. As such, they note and celebrate accomplishments, disseminate and consider constituent concerns, and generate and create ideas to support scholarly progress and systemic betterment. Viewpoints are valued, conceptual visions are enhanced through teamwork, and results are appraised with honesty and compassion. Additionally, the CSC organizes annual forum gatherings where all voices are welcome. The CSC is united with the purpose of improving the school by developing an accessible and secure conduit for communication.

At Cory we believe we are a work in progress. We regard success as a journey, not a destination. We procure the thoughts of the community through our annual Parent Satisfaction Survey. This questionnaire solicits the candid and anonymous views of our community. We analyze the results, determine next steps, and create action plans to implement the defined next steps. This annual measure of our general health informs our evolving goals and priorities.

We appreciate and recognize that we are endowed with an enormous talent pool that includes the extended household of each child. We engage interests among our families through a batch of evening events designed by the collective. We choose a variety of themes encompassing academic topics, artistic practice, communal entertainment, and traditional fetes. We aim to toss a wide net for the sake of captivating an extensive assemblage. At Cory we cultivate a comfortable environment where all of the adults connected to our students are cherished insiders.

3. Professional Development:

We are lifelong learners. We view education as a process, and we are passionate about it. While we are all highly qualified educators, we delight in deepening our insight and expertise. Our creed states that “we grow by trying new things” and we take this to heart.

Our development as professionals happens in multifarious fashions. Our country, state, district, and schoolhouse each have unique compulsory conditions that qualify us for our position as educators. At Cory, we view these requirements as a launching pad for our own diverse professional pursuits.

In addition to weekly staff meetings, we congregate regularly with grade-level, content, and leadership teams. We collaborate vertically and horizontally, with the goal of scaffolding information through the lens of the standards. We discuss current trends, share data, analyze results, and contribute to the planning of upcoming instruction and assessment. We also use these gatherings as an opportunity to celebrate the unique caliber of our roster.

There are specialists among us! Our staff is active in pursuing optional educational opportunities, and they are generous about sharing their learning when they return. Oftentimes, our greatest teachers are our colleagues. One third of our classroom teaching staff serves on our Instructional Leadership Team. This team researches best practices, identifies needs in our realm, and designs a flexible regimen for disseminating information, activities, and prospects for further learning. They arrange a schedule in which PD is offered weekly, which caters to our school-wide events calendar. This maximizes our availability, and allows us a greater opportunity for participation.

As a team, we create a Unified Improvement Plan annually. This guides our priorities, and unites our efforts to target a specific academic goal. Oftentimes we combine this objective with a self-directed ‘Professional Development Unit’. PDUs are offered by the district as a way to reward lifelong learning with a salary building program. Multiple times throughout the year, one of our staff will guide a small study group on a chosen topic for a semester. This collective culminates in a presentation during which insight is shared, feedback is procured and next steps are planned. This year one of our staff members realized a need for some additional training on the use of smart boards for instruction. She organized 6 evening classes, invited the staff, and arranged an expert. Ten of us came to a learning opportunity that was neither paid nor required, just because we felt it was valuable to our development as professionals.

4. School Leadership:

At Cory, there is one principal. The leadership philosophy focuses around the critical element of having a positive culture and climate that reflects our motto of “learning and laughter.” The principal believes that our beliefs and values direct our behaviors and focuses on the importance of adhering to the DPS Shared Core Values of Students First, Integrity, Equity, Collaboration, Accountability and Fun. When these values and their defined behaviors are followed, the realization occurs that we have more that binds us than divides us, and what divides us we can handle through professional discourse. Recognition of these values is done through monthly All Staff Huddles, as well as having an Honor Board where the team can write notes of honor to each other.

Leadership also believes that effective systems and structures are critical to support deep and thoughtful instruction, allow for effective collaboration, and delegation of leadership. Systems and structures that support instructional time include an aligned master schedule, a solid discipline support system, and dependence upon the School Leadership Team (SLT) to assist with operational tasks. Supporting systems for effective collaboration include delegating the task of professional development to the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT). Frequent feedback opportunities are given to the staff to ensure that we are utilizing our strengths to identify goals and action items. These feedback opportunities are available throughout the year via Google Forms, in-person surveys, and annually through the CollaboRATE Survey. This survey is given by a third party vendor to all staff members in DPS and asks for feedback on both the principal and the staff as a whole.

In order to ensure that all stakeholders (staff members, community members and students) are involved in important decision making, the leadership depends upon the Collaborative School Committee (CSC), Parent Teacher Association (PTA), School Leadership Team (SLT), Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) and Student Council (when appropriate) in order to get feedback, refine systems and gain buy-in to various school and district initiatives. Once a month, the chairs of the CSC, PTA and SLT meet to discuss these priorities and ensure we are all in alignment in order to best support our school through “one voice.”

When change does need to occur, the school leader follows the practices under change management to include creating a vision for the change, gaining ownership of the vision, providing resources for the vision, ensuring the team has the skills to work towards the vision and developing an action plan to reach the vision. All of these components make for successful change and, when even one of these components is missing, change can result in confusion, resistance, frustration, anxiety and futility. Leadership believes in ensuring that the change management cycle is followed to allow for the vision of change to come to fruition without causing undue stress or anxiety on the staff. All of this helps guarantee that teachers can use their gifts of teaching to increase student achievement in a supportive environment.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

We believe our GT/HGT Integrated Model makes our school highly successful. Cory is a magnet site for the Highly Gifted and Talented (HGT) program, and has adopted an integrated model of gifted education where both the GT/HGT and non-GT/HGT students are in the general education classroom, led by GT Endorsed teachers (all teachers at Cory have or are in the process of earning the state GT endorsement). In this model, GT/HGT students are provided opportunities for deeper learning within the focus of the core class curriculum ensuring that the learning is aligned to Common Core State Standards and state social studies and science standards.

Our GT/HGT Integration Model offers our GT/HGT students the following benefits: GT/HGT students have a core of academic and social peers within each classroom that they interact with daily, which is an important aspect of gifted and talented education. The integrated model allows our students to interact with intellectual as well as same age peers, which provides a wealth of opportunities for social growth. GT/HGT students are afforded the opportunity to have “the elementary school experience” at the same time as their exceptional academic needs are met. We have a GT Coordinator who supports our classrooms by ensuring that GT testing is completed, Advanced Learning Plans are written and that our GT students receive the supports they need to grow academically, including providing enrichment programs (Stock Market, Semantics, etc). Further, the GT Coordinator analyses school data to identify the gifted and talented pools. She also supports teacher who are working toward their gifted endorsements, and she frequently consults with parents about the need of GT/HGT children outside of school.

Likewise, the non-GT/HGT students benefit from the integrated GT/HGT model as they get exposure to deeper and more critical thinking, participate in more sophisticated discourse, and the overall rigor of the classroom is increased. Because students learn so much from classmate role models the exposure to deeper and more critical thinking leads to deeper and more critical thinking for all students. Similar for student discourse - as students hear others using accountable talk to challenge each other’s thinking, build on each other's thinking, and agree with each other they soon participate in rigorous and more sophisticated student discourse. Lastly, the non-GT/HGT benefit from the integrated model because the overall rigor of the classroom is elevated as teacher explore concepts more deeply, examine issues from multiple perspectives, solve complicated problems, and express complicated thinking in writing.