

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 [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Ms. Cheryl Long

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

Official School Name White Marsh Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 29090 Thompson Corner Road

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

City Mechanicsville State MD Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 20659-4065

County St. Mary'S County

Telephone (301) 472-4600 Fax (301) 472-4604

Web site/URL http://schools.smcps.org/wmes/ E-mail calong@smcps.org

Twitter Handle

https://twitter.com/WMES_SMCPS Facebook Page _____ 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*Mr. J. Scott Smith E-mail jssmith@smcps.org

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

District Name St. Mary's County Public Schools Tel. (301) 475-5511

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. Karin Bailey

(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):
- 19 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 3 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 27 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	16	18	34
1	25	25	50
2	25	20	45
3	22	22	44
4	28	16	44
5	16	14	30
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	132	115	247

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 5 % Black or African American
 - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 84 % White
 - 6 % 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: 13%

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	20
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	13
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	33
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	246
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.134
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	13

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %
2 Total number ELL

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

Mandarin

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 21 %
Total number students who qualify: 54
8. Students receiving special education services: 6 %
14 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.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <u>1</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>4</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>3</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>5</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Mental Retardation | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
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	11
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	5
Paraprofessionals	2
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 22:1

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	94%	96%	95%	96%	95%
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 X

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.

White Marsh Elementary School is a true community of learners where high expectations for learning and social interactions are valued by students, staff and parents.

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

PART III – SUMMARY

White Marsh is a small, rural school located within close proximity to Washington, D.C. The school serves 246 students in Kindergarten through grade 5. White Marsh opened in 1956, and today it still serves the same community of families. White Marsh has a relatively stable population with a history of many generations of families attending. Because of the stable population, staff members build strong relationships with families and continue to be a part of that student's educational family throughout their years at White Marsh and often beyond. Primary teachers continue to be a part of students' lives as they grow academically and socially. Intermediate teachers reach out to learn about the younger students, which facilitates positive relationships in future years. Our fifth grade students eat lunch and have recess with Kindergarten, fostering a mentor type relationship. As students move on to Middle School, parents and students continue to return to White Marsh to visit.

White Marsh has earned a great reputation in the community as having a family friendly school environment. Staff members choose to have children of their own attend White Marsh. Staff members are visible in the community coaching sports teams, attending students' team sports and performances, supporting the local Boy Scout troops, and are active Parent Teacher Association (PTA) board members. At least half of our classroom teachers grew up in our community which promotes a long term trusting relationship with families. Teachers are interacting with families on a regular basis. Staff members and families are proud to be a part of the White Marsh community which inspires a commitment to one another to do our best as parents and teachers.

Staff members understand the importance of building relationships with families. Parents feel they are stakeholders in their child's education and are helpful and supportive to teachers, as they view teachers as experts in education. There is a level of trust that has been established between parents and teachers. Staff members have built those relationships within the building as well. Teachers work not only as grade level teams, but as a whole school team, sharing resources and new ideas, knowing they can rely on one another for most anything. Monthly luncheons and activities planned outside of school support camaraderie among staff members.

The support White Marsh receives from the community surrounding the school is quite evident in the after school programs and in the variety of school events that are planned and well attended. Parents are a part of our after school programs volunteering to support our running club, serving as mentors for our Future Leaders of the World Mentoring Program, sponsoring our Destination Imagination Team and assisting with our math team. Our community outreach involves people participating in Career Day, presenting as guest speakers, our local fire department coming to teach fire safety, as well as the resource officer from the Sheriff's Department mentoring students.

For a small school, the White Marsh families are very giving. Most notably was the support received for two charities in particular, Relay for Life and Pennies for Patients. The student version of Relay for Life, Relay Recess, raised \$8000 in one day with White Marsh achieving gold status as a school for Relay for Life. Over \$2500 was raised in February of this year for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society through the Pennies for Patients Program. Students actively participate in supporting their community and have stories to tell that relate to the charities for which we fundraise. We have participated in hat and mitten drives, as well as food drives.

The White Marsh school culture is built on traditions within the school and the commitment our teachers have to the families. They acknowledge that opportunities within and outside the school day are important in developing the whole child and give their time to make these opportunities possible. Local high school students serve as tutors in our classrooms and perform for our students during holiday events. Teachers and students build on their relationships through activities such as the Annual Thanksgiving teacher-student football game, field day, running club, and science fair.

White Marsh strives to develop students to their full potential. Students are developed holistically. We develop the students' positive behavior, artistic abilities, health and well-being, and academics. Due to our

smaller size, all students get to participate in more activities such as American Automobile Association (AAA) Safety Patrol, White Marsh TV News team, recycling club, book buddies and take on other leadership roles. During recess, students are able to foster responsibility by collecting recycling, working in the media center and other classrooms as peer helpers.

Bi-weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings offer an opportunity for teams to meet for a purpose. Agendas are set that often include data review, professional development, new initiatives, and any topics teachers suggest based on their particular needs. Teachers seek out ways to create, manage and discuss their data to make positive changes for student growth. Conversations between staff are built on trust and respect for each other. Teachers feel safe asking questions and work to uncover best practices.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The Maryland College and Career Ready Standards are the foundation for all instructional planning.

During the 90 minute math instruction block, students can be seen working as a whole group, in small groups, with partners and individually. Small flexible math groups are a daily part of math instruction and are differentiated by skill and student need. Students are identified for specific groups based on academic goals and learning progress. Teachers actively monitor data to regroup students as necessary during math rotations. Students can be seen working with the teacher in a small guided group for both remediation and enrichment. Computer programs are used to reinforce student learning and to practice basic math skills. Fact fluency is seen as an important part of foundational math skills which supports students' ongoing mathematical development. Higher order questions are differentiated and scaffolded to allow all students access to word problems. Instructional staff resources include the special education teacher, instructional resource teacher, and paraeducators who all work together with teaching teams to support the changing needs of students.

The Next Generation Science Standards are included throughout grades K-5 as we transition to the implementation in the 2016-2017 school year. In all grades, teachers incorporate STEM activities and utilize iPads, and implement interactive science lessons created by our school system. Teachers strive to create lessons that are inquiry based. Through experimentation and observations, students discover a concept or main idea, brainstorm together and draw conclusions. Discovery streaming video clips are used to introduce science topics. Students engage in research activities, and those completed projects are then presented to other grade levels. For the past 5 years, all grade 3 through 5 students have completed a Science Fair project, presented to their classmates, and then displayed them for a school wide event for parents, community members, and school system employees. Our community partners also share in educating our children in scientific topics. The local electric company representative visits the school to read to students, give books, and talk to them about the importance of saving electricity. A state environmental organization discussed Poplar Island, in the Chesapeake Bay, and caring for turtles with students. Students' classroom experiences are then connected to the real world through standards based field trips and participation in our school science fair.

Social studies standards are taught through a variety of approaches. In intermediate grades, novels are used to approach both the social studies and reading standards bringing history and experiences to life. These novels and stories are incorporated through reading to pair the historical concepts with reading strategies students are using in the classroom. Historical fiction novels written from the perspective of younger children help students gain perspective bringing the time period alive. Teachers use Interactive Whiteboard activities to enhance their lessons. Instruction is also supported using the textbook, and from participation in field trips that take students to places such as St. Mary's City, our State Capitol building in Annapolis, and Washington, D.C. Students can see government in session, experience hands-on Maryland historical sights, and working farms all within a short drive from our school.

During the 135 minutes of literacy instruction, lessons are presented in a variety of formats. In Kindergarten, theme based instruction is used to teach content skills across multiple subject areas. In the primary grades, students rotate through centers in the classroom that focus on literacy tasks which include reading to themselves and others, independent writing, word work, and listening. As students move through centers, the teacher works with a small group or an individual based on academic needs. Whole group and small group instruction occurs with small flexible groups differentiated by reading level and also by skill depending on the standards. The interactive whiteboard is used to support the interactive nature of planned activities. Assessments are differentiated sometimes using leveled texts allowing for more rigorous instruction and assessment. Spelling and vocabulary activities, help to match the work students do in their phonics based instruction and reinforce newly learned skills. The intermediate grades choose literature and thematic based texts, novels, magazines, articles, and online resources to support instruction in comprehension. There is a variety of materials, in varying genres, to keep students engaged in instruction for

specific skills and understanding. Novels are either teacher chosen or student selected, depending on topics. A variety of approaches are used, and routines are even varied weekly at the intermediate level to keep students engaged. Paired texts are used to approach understanding of the reading standards. Students read in small groups based on their reading levels and engage with the text through interactive activities. Enrichment activities such as the shared inquiry approach are used to develop students' questioning strategies. To support and enhance instructional methods, teachers often engage in book studies on various reading topics. Currently, a group is reading a book involving writing text dependent questions. Skills learned from this and other studies are immediately integrated into instruction and assessment.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Our special curriculum areas support our classroom instruction through a variety of ways. Teachers interact with this team to contribute to planning and enhance the connections students make in all subject areas.

The White Marsh Library Media program supports students and staff in the effective and ethical use of information and ideas, and fosters an appreciation and love of literature and reading. The program also teaches age appropriate computer skills, programming and digital citizenship. The Media Center serves and supports all students and teachers providing a unique perspective of the needs of the entire learning community.

The library media specialist works closely with classroom teachers to identify the learning needs of students. A variety of print and non-print resources are employed to access, evaluate, interpret and apply information. Topics such as weather, animals, landforms, famous Marylanders, and the Revolutionary War have been integrated from the classroom curricula. Students are introduced to a variety of genres and authors, and students eagerly create and share book talks with fellow classmates. Read Across America celebrations, student book swaps and fall and spring book fairs further inspire students' interest in reading. White Marsh students learn in an environment infused with technology including iPads, laptops, and interactive Promethean and Smart Boards. They use a variety of software applications such as PowerPoint, Excel, Publisher, Kidspiration, Word, iMovie and Puppet Pals to organize and share information. The library media specialist uses a media center Twitter account to connect to the community concerning media class activities, new and recommended books, and current trends in technology.

Every student at White Marsh Elementary participates in Visual Arts once a week for a total of 45 minutes. In the Art room, assessment data is gathered using formal methods of assessment for grades 3 through 5. This assessment data is used to focus student learning throughout the year. All grade levels are exposed to a variety of art related vocabulary, and cross curricular connections occur often such as the use of ABC and AB patterns by Kindergarten students. The cityscape project and mittens project specifically reinforce this topic. Primary lessons typically include a piece of literature at the beginning of the lesson, linking the subject of the story with the subject of the finished project. This supports students' acquisition of essential skills and knowledge. Other cultures are commonly discussed in the art room including Guatemala and Panama with Molas and Animalitos. An "artist in focus" board is on display in the art room, with a variety of artists and artwork displayed, exposing students to art history related to their projects. White Marsh has artwork on display throughout the school year in the hallways and offices. Select pieces of artwork from White Marsh students are on display within St. Mary's County as well at the Department of Education building and Maryland's First Lady's Art Gallery, which is a bi-annual student artwork exhibition. White Marsh's art talents are recognized within the building as well, with artist of the month awards from both primary and intermediate levels.

All students at White Marsh Elementary are enrolled in general music consisting of grades K-5. By the end of 5th grade, all general music students are expected to learn to read and interpret music notation, perform expressively individually and in groups. They will also learn to follow the cues of the conductor and also learn how to blend timbres while singing or playing a variety of styles of music. Students will have had multiple opportunities to perform for an audience other than their classmates. Students will be able to use music terminology to explain and evaluate musical performances, orally and visually identify music in many different forms, and sing and identify pitch. Students are provided additional enrichment activities through our string, band, and chorus ensembles. Students also participate in the various All County Ensembles to

further develop personal growth and connections within our community.

In physical education (P.E.), students are learning how to build and maintain a healthy and fit lifestyle. Our P.E. program develops psycho motor, cognitive, and social life skills for all students, grades K-5. Students experience throwing and catching, fitness and nutrition, dance and gymnastic, and striking and kicking units throughout the year. Grades 3-5 participate in a county cognitive assessment at the beginning and end of the year to assess their knowledge. Students also have the opportunity to participate in an after school running club. Participants come once a week after school for 50 minutes to learn and gain knowledge about running, nutrition and keeping active outside of school with the goal to encourage activity outside of school. Our PTA and the physical education department collaborate to present a Fitness Night for families and students. Families participate in both new and familiar activities, learn new information on health and nutrition, and enjoy the other families in a social setting while keeping active.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Staff are continually assessing student progress, reviewing data and making instructional decisions based on data. Technology, such as iPads, interactive whiteboards, e-libraries, and e-stories are used to support all content areas. Our fifth graders have learned to interact with their classroom teachers through the use of Gmail and technology has also been used to interact with students in other schools by our Gifted & Talented students. Classroom journals are used as a reference tool for students and as a portfolio for assessment. There is a team approach for instruction and intervention at all grade levels. Additionally, parent volunteers support small groups in reading and math targeting math facts, problem-solving, and reading strategies. Reading fluency practice, using nonfiction text, is an element of each classroom using a program that also targets summarizing text with a focus on a topic sentence, details and a conclusion. The 40 Book Challenge, where students work at completing a variety of independent reading choices, is done to incorporate more independent reading, and also to promote varied choices in books. Various genres are selected based both on standards and on students' interests. Grammar has become a significant focus in our intermediate grades. Good grammar and writing strategies are taught using mentor sentences from high quality texts.

Interventions are delivered both in and out of the general education classroom. Small groups in math are primarily organized by skill and occur in the classroom. Students work with different staff members throughout the week which supports differentiation of teaching methods and strategies, and it allows for students to be in a small, focused group for reteaching, enrichment and skills practice. Computer programs are used for extra practice to reinforce skills. Departmentalization is another strategy utilized by grades 2-5 for science and social studies. This allows for flexibility to extend units and lessons and to give extra support enabling students to meet expectations. Additionally, experts are sought outside the building to provide additional instructional experiences.

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

White Marsh teachers use a combination of formative and summative assessments that are both county developed and classroom based to measure student progress and plan instruction. At the beginning of the year, we conduct pre-assessments of our students using a variety of assessments. Incoming kindergarten students are given the state's Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. Any students not yet at readiness have a plan developed for remediation in any problem areas. This beginning of the year data is communicated with parents by October during parent-teacher conferences.

Throughout the school day teachers use a variety of formative assessments to drive instructional decision making. These assessments are embedded and used to assess and support learning during the learning process. Formative assessments help us differentiate instruction and thus improve student achievement. Teachers engage in conferences with students to review academic progress and give specific feedback to advance learning. Students are encouraged to use this information to take responsibility for their learning and set academic goals.

Throughout the school year, county-made assessments, nationally normed, and teacher made formative and summative assessments are given to students. Teachers use this data to ensure students are making good

progress on the state standards throughout the year. The data is also shared with parents through conferencing, and on interim and quarterly report cards. School based assessments and daily work is sent home weekly with each child as another way to communicate the progress of each individual student. Our Home Access Center system allows parents to view information in real time pertaining to their student's grades and assessment data. Through this system parents can interact directly with teachers via electronic mail. Quarterly awards assemblies to celebrate student learning also give parents and our community an opportunity to celebrate students' academic success.

At the end of the year, post assessment data is collected using the same instruments as the beginning of the year to assess growth in all content and special areas. Additionally, the PARCC assessment is given to students in grades 3-5 for ELA and Math, and the MSA Science assessment is given to students in grade 5. These results are shared with parents through student home reports. The school uses this data to set School Improvement learning targets.

Our school is a high performing school. In order to maintain our high performance, we have bi-weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings as just one opportunity for grade level staff to come together to review data, consider student progress, make adjustments to flexible instructional groups, and discuss plans for further instruction. Common planning time is also an opportunity for grade level teams to work directly with the instructional resource teacher to review data and plan instruction to meet the varying needs of students using formative and assessment data. Teachers have found value in group scoring of assessments which ultimately guides and improves classroom instruction.

If it is discovered during these meeting times that there is an achievement gap of 10 or more percentage points for any subgroup, a plan for reteaching and remediation is created featuring research based interventions matched to the students' needs. The Pupil Services and Individual Education Plan Teams are another resource for staff collaboration and planning for those students who do not show a response to planned interventions.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

White Marsh Elementary is a true community of learners. Our students, staff, and parents are proud of their school and value the high expectations set by all in not only academics but in social interactions, as well. A commitment is made among all parties to educate all students in an environment of respect. Mutual respect is the foundation for everything at our school. We respect each other's opinions and value each other's input. It may seem simple, but we listen to each other. Interest surveys are a big part of our communication to staff, students and to community stakeholders. Our professional development for teachers, content of parent workshops, and positive behavior incentives for students are all starting points where we are able to find common themes to build our successes upon. Face to face conversations are also essential. We build in time for parent conferences and parent workshops. For students, we devote time for discussions, lunch bunches, and mentoring. For teachers, grade level team discussions, vertical team discussions and individual goal setting conferences are essential. Having a format where everyone feels valued makes for rich, meaningful discussions. Our School Improvement Plan is a living document. We set measurable goals for academics and school climate to hold ourselves accountable. At White Marsh we take pride in each other's successes. At the beginning of each year, we teach and model respect through character education. Character education continues throughout the year with weekly guidance lessons and recognizing children who are exhibiting amazing character through our "Care-acter" Bear of the month awards. We clearly define what good character looks like. All students, Kindergarten through 5th grade can tell you what it looks like in the cafeteria, classroom or playground. We understand the importance of recognizing the commitment of staff every day and recognize each other monthly by awarding Paws for Celebration at our staff meetings. Our school mission to be a Community of Learners is shared with staff and students, where the expectation is presented for all to be responsible for our successes. Students are proud members of the community and strive to meet their teachers' high standards. Our teachers are given resources to create engaging lessons that make our students "College and Career Ready". At White Marsh, we are proud of the amazing things that are happening and highlight them by celebrating student achievement on bulletin boards, morning news announcements, awards assemblies and through social media via Facebook, Twitter, and Class Dojo.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

At White Marsh Elementary, we capitalize on our community resources. We have a partnership with our local high school in which these future educators have completed internship rotations in all classrooms and see firsthand how they can shape young lives. Our teachers are positive, welcoming role models for these high school students, modeling the dedication and commitment it takes to be a teacher, while offering the students opportunities to interact with students. The students at WMES benefit from this relationship. Community members participate in our Future Leaders of the World (FLOW) after school program. In this program, a community mentor is paired with a student. Together they complete homework and work on projects that focus on ways the students want to improve the school. Our F.L.O.W. students are responsible for Thanksgiving Feasts, Bike Rodeos to raise money for underprivileged children, Penny Drives for the Leukemia Society and Food Drives for the local food bank. They also focus on environmental projects such as recycling and building bird houses. The Boy Scouts organization has supported our school by sending a troop to beautify our school grounds. An Eagle Scout and former student also chose our school to complete his Eagle Scout project of building raised planting beds that can be used by our students. Students have reached out to the Veterans in our community taking trips to the Veteran's home and making cards for Veteran's Day. Our Destination Imagination team partners with our community, last year reaching out to local businesses to purchase benches for the playground. Students can go to the "Friendship Benches" if they are looking for a friend or seeking help to work through a conflict. The DI team has also asked community members in the Health Field to participate in Total Mind and Body Fitness Nights to promote healthy living habits.

Our teachers reach out to our community by holding Curriculum Nights where parents are invited to sessions that focus on academics, testing, behavior and online resources to access at home. Career Days

also involve our community where members from all walks of life participate to showcase their career choices. Staff from the St. Mary's County Public Library come to share resources with staff, work with our students, and promote their Summer Reading programs. Our Relay for Life team has always been an important fundraiser to our school and community. White Marsh has led St. Mary's County in donations through spaghetti dinners, community yard sales, and carnival events. Many staff members and parents of our students continue to participate yearly together including getting the whole school involved during our Relay Recess event.

Because of the welcoming climate at White Marsh, we have many volunteers that come into our school throughout the year to help with events such as our Book Fair, Read Across America Day, Running Club, Field Day, and enrichment and interventions for students. Our school understands the importance of engaging the community as all of our efforts were generated during discussions with staff and students. They continually identify needs and implement a plan to help.

3. Professional Development:

Our professional development at White Marsh Elementary is differentiated and based on the needs of the teachers. Sessions are scheduled based on what would be of most benefit to teachers. At times, professional development is implemented to the whole staff to address needs in character education, climate and culture of the building, and using Google resources. Professional development is also grouped for primary teachers, intermediate teachers and special area teachers to address the needs of their curriculum. It is so individualized that even one teacher can participate in professional development to target a specific need such as Smartboard training or assistance with another technology.

At times we create "vertical" grade level teams to go over scoring assessments and implementation of a specific area of the curriculum that all grades may have in common. It has proved to be very beneficial to have teachers see the expectations of the grade level above and below their classes.

All professional development is designed to encourage honest, collaborative conversations about data, students and scoring. This creates an environment where teachers are free to share ideas.

All grade levels participate in frequent data meetings. During these meetings, teachers talk about fluid and flexible grouping for interventions. Grade levels score benchmark assessments together, calibrating their scoring to ensure continuity across the grade.

Teachers both volunteer and are asked to present at County level professional development events to share their expertise. They have also piloted programs in the County such as STEM lessons and the Kindergarten Next Generation Science Standards through use of a pilot textbook resource. Their experiences and opinions are valued by County level supervisors.

Our teachers attend professional development conferences on the topics of Common Core, Charlotte Danielson for Teacher Evaluations, Daily 5, and Foundations. They are always looking to improve their craft through participation in webinars and book studies that target their individual needs and interests.

4. School Leadership:

The Leadership Team at White Marsh Elementary consists of the principal, guidance counselor, instructional resource teacher, special education teacher, and a chairperson from primary & intermediate grades and special areas. The departments meet to discuss needs and share ideas that are working. Ideas and feedback are brought to the leadership team for consideration and further action. Our school improvement plan has the following areas of focus: academic areas, climate and culture, and wellness. The Leadership Team are also members of the School Crisis Team. Beyond the Leadership Team, all staff have the opportunity to draft the School Improvement Plan and Mission Statement through input gathered from their departments. Our team strives to have a clear vision to share with all stakeholders. Having a clear vision makes it easier to create and implement procedures and policies. As a team we clearly prioritize our resources.

At White Marsh we strive to “grow our own” leaders. Every fifth grader is given a leadership opportunity. Teachers creatively design jobs or roles for students such as kindergarten helper, Safety Patrol, media helper, morning news team, book buddies, and academic mentors. Students take pride in themselves and that confidence carries over into every setting of the school.

Consistent and honest leadership is of the utmost importance at White Marsh. Our message is we always want to become better, and we will support each other along the way. Every decision at White Marsh is prefaced with this question... “What is best for the students?”

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

White Marsh Elementary School has a strong collaborative culture that is woven throughout every aspect of what we do. Staff in all roles work together for the good of the school and our community. Secretaries in the main office greet people entering the building, and during busy times such as arrival, dismissal and during school events you may also be assisted by the school nurse or counselor. With offices adjacent to the main office they are always willing to lend a helping hand when available. Families may never have students visit the nurse or counselor, but if they were to they may be comforted by having already met them through interactions in the main office. This practice gives the community the message that all the staff at WMES work together to assist in any way we can. Getting to know our families is important regardless of what role you are in.

The teaching staff at WMES demonstrate a collaborative culture through their actions every day. They will tell you that every child is everyone's responsibility. There is mutual accountability. The small size of our school makes it easy for staff to reach out to each other to discuss students' academic and behavioral needs. They not only work within their grade level but also reach out to teachers school wide. There is constant communication and sharing of ideas not only verbally, but through technology as well. This constant communication with each other and with family members reduces behavior problems and allows for more time on task and a focus on instruction.

Our building services staff walk the hallways throughout the day ensuring that the school is well maintained. They take pride in the work they do and this is evident. One of our building service workers arrives before his shift begins to volunteer in a classroom as a mentor to students.

This evidence of collaboration across all aspects of our school has enhanced our ability to ensure success for all students, teachers, and staff members.