

U.S. Department of Education
2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Skinner Road School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 90 Skinner Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Vernon State CT Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 06066-2723

County Tolland County

Telephone (860) 870-6180 Fax _____

Web site/URL

<https://www.vernonpublicschools.org/skinner-road-school>

E-mail bryan.kerachsky@vernonct.org

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.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Joseph Macary E-mail jmacary@vernon-ct.org

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

District Name Vernon School District Tel. (860) 870-6180

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.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mrs. Anne Fischer
(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.

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

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, leave blank.*

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. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2023 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2022-2023) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district.**)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

☐ Urban (city or town)
☒ Suburban
☐ Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2022 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Students
PreK	46
K	47
1	42
2	45
3	50
4	41
5	50
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	321

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 14 % Asian
 - 11 % Black or African American
 - 29 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 39 % 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 2021 - 2022 school year: 23%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

Due to the high volume of apartments in the Skinner Road School district, this leads to a mobility rate higher than 15%

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, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	44
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	31
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	75
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	321
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.23
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	23

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

Arabic, Bajan, Urdu, Mandarin, Rajasthani, Spanish, Tamil, Telugu, Twi/Fante

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 58 %

Total number students who qualify: 185

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 16 %
Total number of students served 51

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services with an IEP should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>3</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>2</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>11</u> Developmental Delay	<u>16</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>11</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>2</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 2 %
Total number of students served: 8

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 6

11. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	19
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	12
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	8
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

12. 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 9:1

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

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	95%	96%	95%	95%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **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 2022.

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%

15. 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.

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

Skinner Road School is a collaborative community of diverse learners where all members achieve their personal best through a strong educational foundation that prepares them for success in life.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

<https://www.vernonpublicschools.org/district-information/non-discrimination-policies#:~:text=Any%20form%20of%20sexual%20discrimination,member%20of%20the%20school%20community>

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

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

“I love how involved everyone is in the school. My children love going to school every day. All of the teachers do a fantastic job working with the children and helping them succeed.”-Skinner Road School Family (September 2022, School Survey)

This quote from one of our families explains the community feel that is alive throughout our building at Skinner Road School each and every day. There have been many changes to Skinner Road School since its inception in 1963, but the spirit and contributions it has made in the town of Vernon, Connecticut lives on. We believe in, “Love.Care.Trust.Value.”, when we speak of all community stakeholders. It is important for us to create partnerships and trusting relationships from day one.

With close to 330 students, Skinner Road School loves to bring everyone together to start the new school year. A few days before we start the school year, we host a family meet and greet that allows families to meet their new teachers, to get acquainted with one another and make new friends. Simultaneously, this eases the minds of students and families and reduces any anxieties that a new year may bring. On the first day of school, we invite the entire school community to come together to meet in front of our American Flag for a pep rally; establishing a feeling of connectedness, excitement, and purpose from the start.

Over the past 6 years (spanning 2016-2022), the Skinner Road School family is both humbled and honored that the state of Connecticut has recognized us as a, “Connecticut School of Distinction” across four straight years they’ve announced the award (2 years without the honor due to COVID). Skinner Road School is one of ONLY 19 schools in the state of Connecticut to hold that level of distinction over the four years.

At Skinner Road School, we pride ourselves in establishing student agency for each and every one who walks through our doors. By way of our diversified programming, students have many opportunities to choose different pathways that allow them to grow and explore who they want to be as they travel to middle and high school and beyond. Students get ownership in decisions such as if they would like to participate in band or chorus, as well as our interest-based units held in our art, music, and physical education classes. Finally, all students participate in Second Step lessons in order to meet their social-emotional needs. This allows students to be equipped with the dispositions and skills necessary to be productive and contributing members of their communities.

From an academic perspective, if you were to walk into a classroom at Skinner Road School, you would see teachers working one-on-one with a student or with a small group of students to personalize their learning. Following our district’s curriculum, which is guided by the Common Core CT Standards, teachers are able to create lessons and small group instruction around the needs students have, while using student strengths to guide their instruction.

We believe that every day is a chance to get better for everyone involved in the Skinner Road Community. Skinner Road School has become a learning environment for students, teachers, and pre-service students. Teachers have the opportunity to meet for over three hours a week to collaborate around effective pedagogical practices and take in new content when needed. We are excited to partner with local colleges and universities to support their pre-service teachers in the areas of fieldwork and student teaching. It is such a privilege to grow and model the next generation of teachers here at Skinner Road School.

Finally, at Skinner Road School, each year we have a theme that we embed into all aspects of our community. Last year’s theme was inspired by Kara Lawson, the Head Coach of Duke University’s Womens’ Basketball Program, in which she discussed how to, “Handle Hard Better”. This theme was present throughout grade level discussions and bulletin boards throughout the school. It was important for us to show that no matter what we are going through, we can persevere, be resilient, and “handle hard better.”

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

At Skinner Road School, we apply developmentally appropriate and precise instruction in all components of our literacy instruction; including modeling, practice, and feedback. We subscribe to the idea of word recognition times language comprehension equaling reading comprehension, put as the “Simple View of Reading”.

Within our daily literacy curriculum, our teachers have specified blocks for shared reading, reader’s workshop, writer’s workshop, small group work and centers, interactive read-aloud, word study, as well as grammar and conventions. Our workshop model includes the mini lesson (explicit instruction of a skill or strategy through various means, and the active engagement where students work together to practice the skill/strategy before independent reading), independent practice with a “good-fit” book including reading conferences, and a wrap-up share. Other components of the literacy block include an interactive read aloud and grand conversations with accountable talk (either through turn and talk or class conversations). During the interactive read aloud, an emphasis is placed on close reading (rereading at a deeper level of the details of the illustrations and text) and followed up with either oral or written responses. Diversity, equity, and inclusion play a role in our read aloud selection. Foundational skills are strengthened through reading poetry and prose with not only purpose and understanding, but with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression. Our reading instruction in each grade level is broken down into six different units and each lesson is explicit with a learning objective and success criteria. Our teachers are provided suggested texts and resources to support instruction. At Skinner Road School, we understand that the diversity of students’ responses to instruction requires us as educators to be flexible in our selection of content and pedagogy so we can provide equal opportunities for each learner’s development.

Strategy groups and/or guided reading groups are incorporated into the classroom routine and created based on individual conferring and assessment. Within a small group, students are exposed to authentic texts across genres with a focus on social studies and science to both enhance and promote critical thinking. Grade level team members as well as reading consultants and interventionists work together in co-teaching models as well as team meetings to plan for small group instruction to best support and meet the diverse needs of our students as well as continue to follow curricular and state standards.

Within our writing block, students are exposed to different genres of writing such as opinion, informational, and narrative pieces. In our upper grade level, students engage in persuasive essays, argumentative essays, research papers, and literary essays. In addition to this, they have exposure to writing poetry, realistic fiction, mysteries, and fantasies. Our students utilize rubrics and micro progressions to engage in peer editing and revision, which allows for personalized goal-setting and self-assessment. Students engage in presentations as part of a cumulative activity to demonstrate their understanding of the genre and are able to utilize technology to convey their understanding.

Throughout our reading and language arts curriculum, students are afforded access to technology including presentation software, applications that are grounded in the science of reading, and applications that provide study guides and lessons that dive into a concept and help students grasp critical material.

1b. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Our mathematics curriculum is aligned to both the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Mathematics as well as the Mathematics Practice Standards. The CCSS are broken into 5 or 6 units of study at each grade level. Vernon Public Schools has created well-developed curriculum documents for each unit of study including a rationale as to why we teach the topics in each unit, what misconceptions students and teachers may have, and important math vocabulary for the unit. The learning plan includes print resources, digital resources and real-world examples broken down for each topic or skill. Prior to each unit, the grade level

teachers meet with the math interventionists to map out the weekly skills for the upcoming unit. Additionally, they meet each week to plan out their lessons and to discuss strategies. These collaborative meetings build teacher capacity to ensure that students receive high quality instruction.

At Skinner Road School, we are proud to have two daily dedicated math times: the Math Workshop block and an additional twenty-five minute block for math small group time. During the math block, teachers start with a direct instruction mini lesson using a gradual release model. Examples during the mini lesson put the topic or skill in context so that students see why they are learning each skill. Skills are taught using the CPA (concrete, pictorial, abstract) model to provide conceptual understanding to mathematics algorithms. Integrated into the mini lesson are Number Talks which help students improve mental calculation and communicate mathematical reasoning through accountable talk. After the mini lesson, students work on their grade level fluency, application, and independent practice of the concept/skill. Each of these opportunities are differentiated, allowing students to work at their current level of performance. Math interventionists also work with students during Math Workshop time to reinforce the unit skills. Students at Skinner Road School participate in “Fluency Friday” each week to help improve their performance on grade level fluency standards. This increase in fact fluency has positively impacted students’ confidence in their ability to solve more rigorous math problems.

Teachers use a variety of assessments to inform instruction, which ensures that every child gets what they need in their learning journey. Formative assessments such as exit tickets are used to inform and differentiate daily small group instruction. At the end of each unit there are district required assessments. Once the assessment is complete, the grade level teachers and the math interventionists meet to review the end of unit data. Strengths and challenges are discussed as well as things to consider when teaching the unit next year. Teachers then use the data to form groups for math small group time to provide students extra support, intervention or enrichment. Online learning platforms are used during this time so teachers can assign topics or skills to specific students based on need and performance. Additionally, the math interventionists use this math small group time to pull additional Tier II and Tier III groups. The district’s use of iReady as an assessment tool three times a year also helps teachers determine student needs.

1c. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

At Skinner Road School, students engage in the science curriculum through interactive, inquiry-based investigations. The science curriculum is aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards and enables students to make connections and apply their learning to real world experiences. We believe that students learn best through discovery, hands-on learning, and collaboration with their peers. We have teachers who are trained in Project Lead the Way and create lessons that promote problem-solving as well as critical and creative thinking. Throughout our science units, students engage in the Engineering Design Process. Students are able to demonstrate their understanding through the development of models about a concept. They have the opportunity to revise their models and ideas as they move toward mastery of a concept. Students are able to develop their questioning skills, evaluate their progress, and develop solutions to problems they encounter.

Our school is unique as the science program takes an integrated learning approach with STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) and promotes students’ ability to apply new concepts to everyday life. Students in grades three through five are able to participate in the Makers’ Space where they are able to use engineering, art, and technology to design figures and print them using the 3D printer. The school also has a green house on the property that provides students opportunities to engage in differentiated tasks. For example, older grade levels are able to determine the most efficient design and layout for the green house and younger grade levels can collect data as they observe the life cycle of a plant. All together students are able to collaboratively experience the science and engineering practices. Through the student-centered approach focused on scientific inquiry and discovery, students are able to make meaningful connections and apply their knowledge to our ever-evolving world.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

At Skinner Road School our social studies curriculum not only focuses on World history but it offers opportunities to understand the historical significance of our own area. It focuses on our town's rich history and beautiful landmarks promoting fifty-one different field trip opportunities for our students to immerse themselves in local history. Our partnership with our community and its leaders fosters hands-on experiences for our students beyond the classroom.

Our curriculum focuses on community, remembering the past and connecting to it, understanding expansion, geography, states and regions, the American Revolution, the French and Indian War, daily life in the colonies, slavery, the Puritan influence, and North American settlements. Our curriculum also allows students to immerse themselves in current events utilizing sources such as articles, online resources, and various magazines. Students participate in conversations about current issues by forming opinions and using research and evidence to support. Teachers use activities and projects to engage students in the curriculum and encourage students to convey their understanding in different ways. Through our social studies curriculum our students are able to write, discuss, debate, as well as give presentations based on their learnings. We have a diverse population of learners so when our teachers engage in the social studies curriculum we are able to bring student experience and individual connections with regards to history, citizenship, and government into the conversation which brings authentic discourse.

At Skinner Road School, our students are challenged to be critical thinkers. The authentic texts, as well as the embedded social studies lessons in our ELA curriculum, encourages this. Ultimately, the goal of our social studies curriculum, as well as the rest of our curriculum, is that every student becomes a critical thinker, collaborator, communicator, resilient individual, and responsible citizen.

1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:

1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:

Our preschool program focuses on the whole child, where a typical day follows a predictable schedule and includes varied and rich learning experiences. Children participate in literacy activities, which build language and background knowledge, motor movement indoors and out, art activities and promote inquiry through science and exploration within small and large group settings. The program follows the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS), which are the endorsed standards by the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood.

Our goals for school readiness are the same, while the approach for each child is individualized. We want to improve children's health and physical abilities. It is important to encourage confidence, curiosity, and self-discipline in children. We want to encourage children's thinking and learning. Also, we create situations where we allow children and families to relate positively to each other. Every day, we encourage a sense of dignity and self-worth in children through our curriculum and active instructional design framework.

In our preschool classrooms, children are engaged in active play scenarios. While playing, children work through conflicts with objects, other children and adults. Play provides an outlet for curiosity, information about the physical world, and a safe way to deal with anxiety and social relationships. In the long run, play serves children's inner needs, hopes and aspirations.

Finally, we work with all children to meet their individual needs. If a child has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or other individualized plan, we work to address the goals that are identified. Teachers and other program staff will talk with parents regularly about ways to work together to meet goals and about progress.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

Our music program provides students a musical foundation that sequentially develops the student's musical knowledge and skills. The program seeks to foster students' understanding and awareness of music throughout their lifetime. The basic program goals for each student in music are to develop the student's understanding of expressive elements of music to include melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre, tonality, texture, form and phrase structure. Students develop responsiveness to these expressive elements of music in order to promote student's knowledge of musical notation, vocabulary, instruments, literature, composers and history. Finally, students develop skills in the listening, reading, creating and performance of music, consistent with his/her abilities and interests.

Our visual arts program allows students to communicate in a visually creative way. A comprehensive visual arts education program provides the means, knowledge and direction to develop this potential for visual communication. Visual arts education promotes critical thinking abilities that enable children to develop an understanding of past and present cultures, understand a correlation between art and other disciplines, and evaluate their own work and the work of others. The art program builds a foundation that sequentially develops students' visual art skills and knowledge. It seeks to foster an awareness, appreciation and enjoyment of culture throughout lifelong learning.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

Skinner Road School's Elementary Physical Education program is designed to guide students in the process of becoming physically active for a lifetime. Vernon Students are taught developmentally appropriate lessons that include a wide variety of movement experiences and skills, the understanding and application of physical fitness as a lifelong endeavor, and the development of social skills and self-concept. We are so proud of our marathon club that we hold each fall because it puts our beliefs in motion. Close to 40 students participate in this club to highlight the importance of lifelong fitness.

2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)

2d. Technology/library/media

2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share

At Skinner Road School, students receive five, forty-minute periods weekly to support the unified arts program in Vernon. This has students following an A, B, C rotation schedule with Art, Music, and Physical Education. Students also have access to a makerspace time, as well as a library time to support our readers. Our 5th grade students have an opportunity to participate in Band, while our 4th and 5th grade students can participate in Chorus. These programs happen weekly throughout the school year.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

All students at Skinner Road School receive high quality curriculum and instruction. Our specialists conduct support groups in reading, math, as well as social/emotional learning. Despite our explicit and intense instruction, we do have students performing below grade level. When this happens, our team of specialists and teachers come together to meet student needs. We execute a TIE meeting (tier 1 enhancement) which is a precursor to the multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) process and is meant to support teachers with instruction.

Once a teacher has identified concerns in an academic or social/emotional area, they follow this model. The teachers gather background information from parents and past teachers. Coverage is afforded so appropriate staff can attend initial meetings. The team reviews data and comes together to brainstorm strategies to support the teacher. A SMART goal is developed, an appropriate time frame and a time to reconvene is

established. Depending on the results, a student can be dismissed, a new goal can be set, the goal can continue, or the student can be referred to tier two.

Our tier two process follows a similar format where team members will meet and decide on a goal, revised or not, who is delivering the instruction, where and when this will take place and the duration of the intervention. When reconvening, the team will change or add a new goal based on need, dismiss the student, decide on another strategy, or move to tier three. Our tier three intervention is five times a week for 25-30 minutes in a small group of students. It follows the same process as tier two. However, one of our outcomes could result in a referral to special education if a student is not making adequate progress.

Our proactive approach to our students performing below grade level helps to eliminate the achievement gap and strengthen communication between teachers, interventionists, and specialists to make sure we meet the needs of all our students.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

With differentiation as a core principle in our Skinner Road School curricula, students who perform below as well as students who perform above grade level are given opportunities based on their level of performance. We believe that rather than moving on to the next grade level's content, providing students with enrichment should give them a deeper understanding of the content at their grade level. Opportunities include more challenging reading materials, performance tasks, project-based learning, or DOK (depth of knowledge) leveled math choice boards, to name a few.

With a dedicated math small group time and reading small group time, students are given opportunities for challenges. Online learning platforms such as iXL or Dreambox allow students to choose advanced content to work on and it allows teachers to assign topics/skills to challenge students.

In addition to our Tier I enrichment opportunities, the district gifted and talented teacher identifies gifted and talented students in the fall of grade three. Students are given the CogAT (Cognitive Abilities Test) universal screening test to identify who qualifies as Gifted and Talented. Those students who qualify, receive additional services weekly through our Endeavor program. Students tackle new challenges by applying their problem-solving skills and creativity to innovate new solutions. Students in grade 2 are solving challenging number, logic and spatial reasoning problems while students in grade 3 are using a program called Hands-On-Equations to learn algebra. In grades 4 and 5, students are completing an invention unit which includes creative thinking skill training and utilizing the engineering design process. Some of the inventions students have conceptualized this school year include; a battery powered robot with a gripper attachment that can grip and move packages from the warehouse to the delivery location, a slide which transports recycled items and sorts them into plastics, papers, food scraps, and cardboard, a box shaped propeller drone that delivers packages from the facility to the person's house quickly and at low cost.

3c. Students with disabilities:

At Skinner Road School, we are responsive to the needs of our students and recognize the responsibility we have to Child Find and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. When any member of our team suspects a disability, when it is deemed that our tier three students require specialized instruction, or a parent has requested evaluation, we complete a referral to special education. Due to our close collaboration between all specialized teams in the building, our special education team is a part of and aware of the work our tier intervention team members have done and has access to all our SMART goals and data.

The special education department and teachers at Skinner Road School provide specially designed instruction to students with exceptional learning needs in order to engage them meaningfully in high quality learning environments so that each and every child has the opportunity to achieve a high level of success both in and out of the classroom. Students can be eligible for speech and language therapy, school social work, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and/or behavioral support based upon their needs. All school-based professionals work as a cohesive team to provide the best educational setting for each student.

The collaboration between special education and general education staff at Skinner Road School fosters a learning environment conducive to supporting all students in working towards achieving classroom standards. Individual needs are identified and specific programs are designed and planned through the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) process. The PPT identifies students that are eligible for special education and collaboratively develops Individual Educational Plans (IEPs). The creation of the IEP and the delivery of services are done in collaboration with the general education teacher, parents, and related service providers, and are implemented within the Least Restrictive Environment. Special education teachers and related staff members communicate with families on successes of students and work closely to build relationships to ensure students meet with success. The special education teachers at Skinner Road School meet the students at his/her instructional level and work hard to guide them along the road to high achievement.

3d. English Language Learners:

3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

At Skinner Road School, we work hard, try our best and reach for the stars. This simple and consistent message is delivered each morning by one of our fifth-grade students and sets the tone for our expectations around S.T.A.R. (safe, truthful, academic and respectful) behavior.

As students enter the building, they are welcomed by smiles from familiar and caring adults. You can see older students walking hand-in-hand with our younger students and hear the sounds of laughter and people greeting one another. Skinner Road School goes a step further to encourage autonomy and reinforce the message that all students are welcome. Classroom teachers meet their students at the door for a personal greeting selected by the student each and every day.

The Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) staff committee is an integral part of engaging students with the events they organize. This includes spirit days, reading challenges and the Pumpkin Character display; an event all grade levels and classrooms participate in.

While our morning announcements set the tone, our hallways set the stage. As you enter our building, a large screen tv shuffles photos introducing our staff along with pictures of our students caught “being real”. Our hallways are decorated with student artwork from all grades. The muraled walls were painted by a local artist and are visually engaging. Since 2007, Skinner Road School has participated in the Hartford Marathon. A group photo from each year hangs in the hallway to acknowledge this tradition and everyone’s hard work. Skinner Road School offers a variety of after school activities including running club, twirling, Lego League and basketball.

Student Council is offered to our fifth-grade students. This is an opportunity for students to explore leadership within the building and represent the voice of our student population. In addition to exploring ways to make Skinner Road an even better place for students, they are also responsible for operating the school store. This includes marketing and product selection based on student feedback. This further advances our commitment to the vision of the graduate and producing youth that are ready to take on any challenge post-graduation.

Recognizing and celebrating one’s personal achievement is a standard at Skinner Road School. Every Friday, “Star Students” are announced by our principal. A star student is recognized by their classroom teacher, or any other referring staff member, for an academic or personal achievement. All the students gather in the gym for a photo with our principal. The photo is posted online and the child’s individual star is hung on the wall at the entrance to our building for everyone to celebrate.

We are proud of our students and believe that in order for students to do their best, they have to feel their best. Social-emotional learning is essential to Skinner Road School’s success. We use Second Step, a research-based curriculum for all grade levels. A key component of this curriculum is the school-home connection.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

At Skinner Road School, establishing relationships is a priority. This core value extends throughout our building and into the community. To begin the year, a “Meet and Greet” is organized to allow students and their families an opportunity to personally meet their teacher and see the classroom before the school year begins. On the first day of school, it is common practice to see our principal gathered alongside staff, students and families to officially welcome the new school year.

We consider our students, their families, and community partners our family. Our principal regularly communicates with our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). We are fortunate to have parents who are actively involved in the continued success of our school through various fundraisers and events. Open

communication and ongoing relationships create a sense of belonging. “Hopes and Dreams” Conferences are held in the fall and are one example of how we engage families and honor their voice. These conversations serve an opportunity for parents/guardians to tell the teacher about their child and what their hopes are for their child this school year. The significance of establishing a relationship with families is crucial to student success, therefore, we try our best to make it possible for all families to participate. We offer before school, afterschool, evening, virtually, in-person and over the phone availability.

Each year, our Family Engagement Survey looks at the following categories: school climate, school safety, staff-family relationships and school fit. The results of our fall 2022 survey indicate an overall favorable score of 96% which is a true reflection of the good work we are doing here at Skinner Road School. In all categories, we received a 94% or higher. Read Across America is an example of our community partnership. We open our doors to volunteers from the fire department, police department and representatives from the Vernon Board of Education to walk through our halls and read to our students. Our partnership with the community extends from our local library all the way to the barbershop. Because of these partnerships, students learn about fire safety and are able to tour community buildings. Our community supports and believes in our students and their social/emotional and educational success. We have had generous donations for school events and families in need, such as, gift certificates for free haircuts, support for food insecurity and housing, and access to multiple resources.

School-based committees also contribute to engaging our family and community. The Family Engagement committee hosted a movie night with over 200 students and families in attendance. One of our local restaurants donated popcorn for the event. Our principal and one of our fifth-grade teachers volunteered to get “pie-d” in the face for surpassing our attendance goal. The event was streamed live on our Facebook page to reach those who were unable to attend.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The staff at Skinner Road School embrace a growth mindset. We understand that to create a professional culture where teachers can continually “perfect their craft” and better meet student needs, we need ongoing feedback, analysis of work, and collaboration among colleagues. That is why we have structures in place, such as coaching cycles with outside professionals, school based PDEC (Professional Development and Evaluation Committee) Walkthroughs, and schedules that allow for dedicated meeting time with colleagues.

We regularly engage in coaching cycles with outside consultants to enhance our skills in math, language arts, and social emotional learning. These professionals help our teachers dive into the latest research in education and implement best practices into our classrooms. This involves observations of practice, goal setting, planning for targeted instruction, and monitoring student progress.

Additionally, every three months our school participates in PDEC Walkthroughs. The committee establishes goals and expectations for classroom instruction and creates plans that describe how professional learning is developed, implemented, monitored, and evaluated. Our latest walkthroughs have focused on foundational reading skills and personalized student learning. After these observations, teachers are provided feedback that helps them continue to grow as professionals.

One of the most impactful structures we have put in place is our unique schedule that allows more time for teachers to collaborate and plan together. “Late Start Wednesday” is a day when teachers have the morning to plan, while students go to specials and extra-curricular activities, such as coding, library, and SEL. Teachers meet with both math and reading specialists to take a close look at student data and plan for upcoming units. This time allows us to analyze student work, form groups based on progress, and plan for interventions. Teachers meet with grade level teams to align instruction and plan lessons.

In addition, we have monthly PLC meetings for grade level teams to collaborate together and we have restructured our dismissal procedures to allow for extra planning time for teachers. Support staff and specials teachers have taken over dismissal procedures, so that students can exit the classroom at the end of the day and wait for their bus in a different setting. Teachers use this time to evaluate, plan, and prepare for instruction.

Our school values the time we have to learn and grow together. As a result of our commitment to professionalism, we are able to maximize our time and create targeted instruction that enhances student learning.

4. School Leadership:

We hold the belief at Skinner Road School that the school belongs to all! Our distributive leadership style allows us to leverage leadership from all parts of our community. From our School Leadership Team, our various committee structures, and professional learning communities, this gives many stakeholders a voice in the work we are doing to make our school the best it can be for our students. Each year we continue to build teacher-leader capacity through these systems, which allows more time for students to grow academically and socially.

Each year begins at Skinner Road School with themes to match the work going on that year. Knowing the words we live by our “Love.Care.Trust.Value.”, we create themes to get the best out of our whole school community. This year we used the inspiring words of Duke Womens’ Basketball Coach, Kara Lawson, who spoke about, “Handling Hard Better”. This talk fits so well with how we want students to persevere and be resilient when faced with a challenge.

Our school leadership team comes together in the summer to plan for our upcoming school year to ensure that all of our work is aligned to our mission, vision of the graduate, and the district’s strategic plan. This group of eight teachers helps build the school improvement plan, which oversees our growth in academics, social-emotional development, and family partnerships. This work by the school leadership team checks all the boxes in making sure all of our arrows are pointing in the same direction allowing for student growth. Finally, this group works with data to make sure that there are no gaps any students are facing when they come to school each and every day.

At Skinner Road School, we have six committees that work to support our school improvement goals for the year. We decided to have more committees with less people on each committee so more actionable work can be done. The committees focus on teacher time (finding more planning time), equity, positive behavior supports, staff celebrations, cultural awareness, and family engagement. These committees share out at staff meetings and bring our school community to life!

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Skinner Road School “feels like what an elementary school should feel like – warm, welcoming, caring, and kids are learning a lot!” This quote, said by an educational consultant, during a recent walk-through, is exactly what our school family strives for!

Our teachers pride themselves in their relationships and high expectations for all students. Our District Equity Committee has led teachers through equity-based training and courageous conversations around student backgrounds and needs. As a result, we have become more reflective about our own beliefs and knowledgeable about other cultures and life circumstances. Teachers build strong relationships with students and their families to maintain a whole child approach where social, emotional and academic needs are met to achieve success.

We work hard to create a culture of acceptance; a place where students feel safe, welcomed, and valued. Our Cultural Awareness Committee understands the importance of partnering with families to ensure we are responsive to the cultures in our school. This is evident in the survey they send to families asking for suggestions to make our school more accessible and inclusive to our families. Additionally, teachers incorporate various relationship building strategies, such as the 2x10 strategy and lunch bunch groups, allowing time for meaningful connections with all students.

Diversity lives and breathes through our school. Our curriculum integrates many different cultures and the hallways are lined with diverse literature and visuals, representing our family’s backgrounds. Classroom

literature and interactive read aloud lessons integrate diverse topics, such as physical and mental exceptionalities, poverty, and various cultures. Exposure to these topics helps students to identify with the characters in the books and see themselves in the work they do. Furthermore, these lessons help students begin to understand, empathize, and connect with people of different circumstances. The unique backgrounds that our students bring to the classroom are identified and celebrated.

Families are encouraged to share important traditions and customs and are encouraged to be guests in the classroom to share in these celebrations. A great example of this is when a parent came in to teach a second-grade class about the celebration of Holi. She read a book and then led the class in a traditional “festival of color” activity. This was an experience that many students may not have been exposed to, if it wasn't for their school family!

As a result of our efforts, staff and students believe that our differences are what make us special and that everyone at SRS will get what they need to be successful.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

Skinner Road School is unique in that we have created a learning community for both students and staff.

We have developed one particular strategy that we believe has led to academic success and supported our growth mindset community, which we refer to as “Late Start Wednesday.” This creative and unique structure provides time for teachers and staff to collaborate together while students engage in various learning activities that promote personal growth. Every Wednesday two grade levels start their day off having two hours of time with their professional learning communities and specialists within the school. While teachers are building capacity and working together, students are engaged in Social-Emotional Learning Lessons, technology classes focused on coding, or participating in a daily special. “Late Start Wednesdays” have proven to be beneficial for our entire school community.

During the late start time, teachers meet with math and reading specialists to participate in data teams or planning meetings. Together, teachers analyze student data to determine whole class needs as well as specific student needs. The data analysis supports the collaborative lesson planning process where teachers are able to share their experiences, reflect on their practice, and develop common teaching strategies to best support our students. Teachers are able to work together to meet the needs of not only their individual classes but of all students in the grade level as they share resources and develop lessons that promote personalized learning.

“Late Start Wednesday” is beneficial for both teachers and students. Students participate in learning experiences that provide the opportunity for creativity, self-reflection, and team-building. During this time, our school social worker engages students in Social-Emotional Learning lessons that are aligned with the CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social Emotional Learning) framework. Students are able to engage in reflection based on their own experiences and learn strategies for dealing with various situations in and out of the classroom. In addition to Social Emotional lessons, students are provided lessons in technology, specifically coding. They are able to use computational thinking and problem-solving skills. Students also participate in a daily special of art, music, or physical education where they can express their creativity.

This one strategy has been able to reach our entire school to empower teachers and provide creative growth experiences for students. It has made an impactful difference and is truly a key driver to the overall success of our Skinner Road School community.