

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 [X] Charter [] Magnet[X] Choice

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

Official School Name Roots Public Charter School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 15 Kennedy Street NW
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Washington State DC Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 20011-5201

County District of Columbia

Telephone (202) 882-8073 Fax (202) 882-8075

Web site/URL http://www.rootspcs.org E-mail bthompson@rootspcs.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.

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Bernida Thompson E-mail bthompson@rootspcs.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Roots Public Charter School Tel. (202) 882-8073

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 Dr. Jesse Sharpe
(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, 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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
0 Middle/Junior high schools
0 High schools
0 K-12 schools
- 1 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	26
K	13
1	11
2	13
3	13
4	10
5	15
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	101

*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):
- | |
|--|
| <u>0</u> % American Indian or Alaska Native |
| <u>0</u> % Asian |
| <u>100</u> % Black or African American |
| <u>0</u> % Hispanic or Latino |
| <u>0</u> % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander |
| <u>0</u> % White |
| <u>0</u> % 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: 5%

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

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	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	5
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	105
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 100 %

Total number students who qualify: 101

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 5 %
Total number of students served 5

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>0</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>0</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>4</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>1</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 1 %
Total number of students served: 1

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 24

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	4
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	8
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	0
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	1
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	0

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 15:1

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	92%	94%	92%	94%	93%
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.

The mission of the Roots Public Charter School is to offer a culturally relevant (African Centered) and academically stimulating curriculum. The goal is to groom productive, well-rounded leaders for tomorrow.

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

https://www.rootspcs.org/discrimination_policy.html

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

Families interested in Roots Public Charter School, RPCS, go to www.myschooldc.org and choose Roots PCS as their first choice. Roots will receive notification from the lottery that Roots can then accept the family and give the family the enrollment application documents.

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Roots Public Charter School (Roots PCS) was founded in 1999. It is a community-based, family-oriented, small African-Centered school located in Ward 4 of Washington, D.C. Roots PCS serves students in grades PK3-5. A majority of the students begin attending Roots at the age of 3 and remain in attendance through 5th grade. Roots PCS has a high teacher and administrative staff retention rate. Most teachers are either former students of Roots PCS or have been teaching at Roots PCS for more than 10 years.

Roots PCS is located in a residential community and on the commercial corridor of Kennedy Street Northwest. The neighbors include a gas station, tire shop, apartment buildings/condominiums and other commercial businesses. The community is historically and majority African American with a median household income of \$54,488 (2020). The students travel from all four quadrants of the city (NW, NE, SW, SE) to get to school. Students arrive to school on foot, by car, or using mass transportation. There is a Metrobus stop two blocks away and a Metrorail station less than a mile from the school. There are green spaces and public play areas within a three-mile radius of the school.

Roots PCS teaches from an African-Centered worldview for its curriculum, and this is the key strategy Roots PCS uses that encourages and challenges the students to develop their full potential academically, emotionally, physically, socially, and culturally. The title of the core curriculum guide is "African-Centered Interdisciplinary Multi-Level (AIM) Hands-On Science". This core curriculum guide is aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for ELA and Math, as well as the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

The primary objective of the curriculum is to build competencies among our students covering all cognitive subjects as we impart historical and cultural values/traditions by way of the songs, pledges, rituals, the Nguzo Saba (seven Africentric principles of living), adinkra symbols (symbols representing the West African value system), and literature reviews based on African and African American texts.

The methodology centers around African pedagogy: visual, verbal/auditory, kinesthetic/tactile, camaraderie, and the Nguzo Saba. The design and approach of the school atmosphere is composed of multi-grade classes in an open-space environment. The teachers “loop” with their students in these multi-grade classes, which allows for stronger relationships between the teachers, students, and the families. The Roots PCS program consists of individualized and small group instruction for English Language Arts and Math each morning. During the afternoons, there's student engagement with interdisciplinary activities, such as social studies, science, music, art, and PE. Students are provided opportunities to participate in oral and written presentations and contests, which are schoolwide and citywide.

Roots PCS participates in the National School Lunch Program, for which 100% of the families qualify for free/reduced lunches. The school also provides free breakfast and snacks. Meals are prepared and delivered twice a day by a local caterer.

As a means of exposure, Roots PCS students participate in African Drumming and Dance as well as DC Hand Dance once a week. The school also provides local field trips and interactive science presentations which offer students exposure and experiences in the world outside the classroom. There are field trips that focus on the monthly science theme and field trips that focus on Black culture. In addition, our students are engaged in learning Spanish, French, and Kiswahili. Lastly, the students participate in the citywide Spelling Bee, the school-wide Malcolm X Oratorical Contest, and the citywide Kwanzaa Essay Contest.

What makes Roots PCS unique is its African-Centered worldview and environment. Roots PCS is a community, like an African village. Students refer to the teachers as "Mama/Baba." Students feel safe and loved by all adults in the building. Social and emotional support is embedded in every aspect of the program. Every day the students participate in the school's cultural morning opening ritual. Throughout the day, Roots PCS implements the Nguzo Saba to encourage character development and instill values.

Roots PCS also uses its AIM Hands-on Science curriculum and the cultural aesthetics of African greatness

that adorn the walls to instill in our students that they have genius in their genes. The students respond by their enthusiasm to volunteer for the Citywide Spelling Bee, the Malcolm X Oratorical Contest, the Kwanzaa Essay Contest, etc. This is why Roots was chosen out of all the DC Public and Public Charter Schools as one of the top 14 Bold Performance Schools by Empower K-12. Roots PCS was selected as a Bold Performance school because while 70% of the school population is considered "at-risk," the students performed 7.5% proficient above expectations.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

Reading/English Language Arts (ELA) is taught through the Roots PCS core curriculum entitled AIM Hands-On Science. The ELA program used is Journeys, which is published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. The school chose the Journeys ELA program because of its alignment of the program to its assessment tool, as well as the PARCC assessment. The main components of Journeys are phonics, reading comprehension, writing, language, critical thinking, research, listening and speaking. The program has a diagnostic test which is given to students at the beginning of the school year. Data from the diagnostic is used to inform teaching. The Journeys program assessments are Benchmark 1,2,3, and 4. Each benchmark covers a portion of the school year's content. Teachers use the data from each benchmark to inform instruction, determine small groups, and develop student goals. Benchmark 4 is the final assessment of the entire year's content. The PARCC standardized test is the citywide test that is given as an assessment to Roots students in grades 3-5. Reading/English Language Arts is taught daily in the mornings. Journeys is a comprehensive program that provides teachers with scaffolded lessons to accommodate a variety of student needs. Teachers use whole class instruction, small group, and individualized instruction. The ELA program consists of multi-cultural and interdisciplinary content. The Journeys program includes a digital component whereby students are given licenses so they can interact with the curriculum online and complete their lessons digitally. The students read literature about real people and circumstances. Students are exposed to project-based learning and opportunities to reenact the stories through creative art projects and theatrical productions. The program encompasses elements of social studies, science, and math. The Journeys program prepares students for their participation in the schoolwide Malcolm X Oratorical Contest sponsored by the Roots Board of Directors, the Citywide Spelling Bee, and Citywide Kwanzaa Essay Contest sponsored by the DC Children's Trust Fund.

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

The mathematics curriculum is also taught through the Roots PCS core curriculum, AIM Hands-On Science. The math program is called My Math, which is published by McGraw-Hill. The school chose the My Math program because of its alignment of the program to its assessment tool, as well as the PARCC assessment. The main components of the program are number sense, algebra, fractions/decimals, geometry, and measurement of time, distance, liquids/solids. The My Math program has a diagnostic test which is given to students at the beginning of the school year. Data from the diagnostic is used to inform teaching. The My Math program assessments are Benchmark 1,2,3, and 4. Each benchmark covers a portion of the school year's content. Teachers use the data from each benchmark to inform instruction, determine small groups, and develop student goals. Benchmark 4 is the final assessment of the entire year's content. The PARCC standardized test is the citywide test that is given as an assessment to Roots students in grades 3-5. Math is taught daily in the mornings. The My Math program is a comprehensive program that provides teachers with scaffolded lessons to accommodate a variety of student needs. Teachers use whole class instruction, small group, and individualized instruction. The My Math program consists of real-world scenarios with which students can readily relate. The program also has hands-on activities and projects embedded throughout the lessons. The My Math program includes a digital component whereby teachers are given licenses so they can present the curriculum online using the Smart Board. Students are also able to engage with My Math using the Smart Board as well. Teachers use whole class instruction, small group, and individualized instruction to teach math daily. The My Math program encompasses real life situations with word problems that involve several steps to find the answers. Students have digital licenses for another math program called Zearn. Zearn is an online program provided by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). Zearn is self-paced and provides scaffolded instruction. The students enjoy interacting with the program because it is reward point-based and is embedded with incentives and digital brain breaks (i.e. math games). Both math programs are aligned to the CCSS and work together to ensure that the students are prepared for PARCC. The PARCC standardized test is the citywide test that is given as an assessment to Roots PCS students in grades 3-5.

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

The science curriculum is the central focus of the Roots core curriculum. In addition to the Roots AIM Hands-on Science curriculum, Roots uses a digital series platform from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. It is also interdisciplinary and encompasses all of the disciplines: reading, math, social studies, art, technology, and science. This science program includes a digital platform and student licenses. The Roots science curriculum and the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Journeys curriculum are both aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards. At the beginning of each month, Roots has a local African American scientist to come to the school for a science presentation and hands-on activities based on the month's science theme, which changes monthly. Teachers then use afternoons to allow students to delve into the enjoyment of science. The Roots themes are Earth Science for September, Chemistry for October, Animals for November, Light and Sound for December, Weather for January, Electricity and Magnetism for February, Space Science for March, Human Body for April, Plants for May, and Simple Machines for June. Roots provides field trips each month based on science themes. In previous years, the students enjoyed participating in the Citywide Science Fair, but there hasn't been one since the pandemic. The classes now demonstrate for each other at the end of each month's theme. This is how students are assessed in science.

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

The social studies curriculum content is also taught through our core curriculum which is through an African Centered worldview. The students are shown who they are, where they are, and what they must do to have a productive and successful life and community. Roots uses the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Journeys series as our textbook and students have digital licenses to accompany the curriculum. In addition, Roots uses a host of materials and projects. Another resource that the teachers use to teach social studies is SETCLAE (Self-Esteem Through Culture Leads to Academic Excellence) written by Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu. Many of the activities are tied to the reading/English Language Arts curriculum. One of the assessment tools that Roots uses is the Nguzo Saba (7 principles of living). The principles are Umoja (unity among one another), Kujichagulia (self-determination), Ujima (collective responsibility), Ujamaa (cooperative economics), Nia (having and showing purpose), Kuumba (creativity), Imani (having faith). Roots also uses the Common Core State Standards to assess students in Social Studies. The District of Columbia has adopted an updated and more inclusive set of standards for Social Studies. The current (outgoing) set of standards has not been updated/revised in over 15 years. This is an exciting time in DC as the new Social Studies standards are being launched for implementation. Roots' teachers were given the opportunity to attend a convening to discuss and unpack the standards and discuss among colleagues. The new standards include anchor standards in Inquiry, History, Civics, Geography, and Economics. For kindergarten-fifth grade, the focus is on Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills. Also, for grades three-five, Civics is added with Government and Human Rights: Engaging in Civil Discourse and Taking Informed Action. The Journeys Social Studies curriculum, used by Roots, is aligned with the revised state standards.

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

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

The Roots pre-primary is for the students that are three and four year old students. The core curriculum provided is still the African Centered Interdisciplinary Hands-On Science curriculum aligned with the DC Common Core Standards. The core areas provided are science, literacy, language arts, social-emotional, physical, and cognitive skills. Roots uses the Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment for Language Arts and Math. The teachers design and promote children's active engagement with the environment and social engagement with each other. Teachers also provide learning experiences to promote children's language development, critical thinking skills, creativity, and early academic skills to ensure that our children are well-prepared for success in kindergarten and beyond. We teach through music and songs, poetry, affirmations, arts and crafts, creative play, as well as reading and math materials. The pre-primary standards are aligned with the kindergarten through third grade standards. Indicators of the impact our early childhood education program on the school readiness and success in the primary grades are the data scores on the

Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment. Roots pre-primary program has always scored in the 90's or 100% of its pre-primary children mastering the school readiness objectives. Students enrolled in Roots pre-primary program at the age of three remain with their teacher for two years. The pre-primary program is evaluated by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). For the last two years, Roots pre-primary program received the highest ratings during the CLASS observations.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

Arts are interwoven into all the core subject areas. Art standards are found in the AIM Hands-On Science curriculum. Art projects support students' acquisition of essential skills and knowledge in language arts, math, social studies, and science. Students engage in performing arts in language arts and social studies by reciting speeches, role playing, and dramatic presentations. Art is therapeutic and helps to support social and emotional growth. Students also express themselves through visual arts in math and science by drawing, making pictures, and coloring. In science, student art projects and assignments reflect the month's theme. Cutting and pasting as an art activity supports student skills and knowledge. All grades participate in art activities daily. At Roots, art projects and presentation lend themselves to family engagement, as several projects are focused on family interaction. Music is interwoven into all of the core subject areas. Songs related to language arts themes, math concepts, science themes, and social studies themes are used to support student learning. Music and songs are also embedded in the daily morning culture circle.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

Physical education/health/nutrition is also intertwined with all core subject areas. Aside from the recess breaks, regular PE time, and lunchtime's nutrition/health education, physical education supports students' acquisition of essential skills and knowledge in language arts when we provide relays and other physical games connected to the various language arts skills. Students use math basketball or other physical activities to connect to learning math skills. Social skills are easily taught through active play, and science skills can be taught through science physical activities too. All grades participate in physical education/health/nutrition in various ways. In the pre-primary, students engage in physical activity 90 minutes/day and the students in grades K-5 engage in 75 minutes/day. Another way students in K-5 participate in physical activity education is through African Drumming and Dance class and DC Hand-dance Class. These classes support students acquisition of the science of time, rhythm, geometry, language, and social studies. Students in grades 3-5 also participate in double dutch class for 120 minutes/week. Roots has a local wellness policy which may be accessed through the website.

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

There are three foreign languages taught to all students, preprimary through the fifth grade. These languages are Spanish, French, and Kiswahili. Languages are rotated and taught over three-year cycles. The students are taught 10 lessons covering greetings, numbers, common sayings, colors, names of clothing, days of the week, and months of the year. Students also learn to sing a song in each language. Sometimes these lessons are taught during the morning opening culture class. Other times they are taught in the afternoons. Roots feels that the acquisition of other languages that people of color speak makes our students more literate and accepting of diversity.

2d. Technology/library/media

Technology/library/media is a 21st century skill that all students need to master. Roots supplies desktops, laptops, chromebooks, and tablets and internet for all students, preprimary through fifth grade. Each classroom is equipped with SMARTBoards and all teachers are given laptops. Students are taught technology skills, taken to the public library for library skills, and taught to operate the smartboard and media center. Technology skills support the acquisition of language arts, math, and science knowledge

because the language arts, math, and science programs Roots uses are digital platforms and students have licenses. Students in grades 3-5 are administered the PARCC assessment, which is computer-based. This Spring, Roots will upgrade the school's audio-visual system.

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

The most innovative and unique curriculum program Roots provides is our African Centered program. All subjects are taught through the African Centered Worldview. There are monthly science and cultural fieldtrips, science theme presentations which show people of color as pioneers and present-day scientists, and videos/showings that give an accurate depiction of the history and culture of people of color. The African Drumming and Dancing class, the DC Hand-dance class, and the Malcolm X Oratorical contest are all unique aspects to Roots. These unique and innovative activities encourage success, leading to self-reliance and economic, social/political contributions to society; promote and secure the connection of Mother Africa within our children; prepare students to break the chains of psychological conditioning that attempt to keep them powerless in all phases of society; provide students with a strong African-centered learning environment, and guide students toward academic excellence, exemplary character and social responsibility.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

When students perform below grade level on the PARCC test or any benchmark in-house test, teachers work with those students on what skills they still need to develop. Teachers work with those students in small groups and individually. OSSE has tutors for Roots to also use that come to the school three afternoons per week. Students will receive instruction and assignments on grade level, however, the work will be scaffolded. Additionally, individualized SMART goals are prescribed to students who may need additional layers of support. SMART goals are student goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-based. These goals are student-centered, data-informed, and data-driven. Teachers are in direct and constant communication with families of those students who may be performing below grade level.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Students performing above grade level are given enrichment activities and may even be skipped a grade if the student data indicates that they are beyond those skills tested in all core subjects. Teachers will work with those students in small groups/individually. Students performing above grade level are also prescribed individual SMART goals that are tracked over a specific period of time. Once met, the goals are revised based on student data and performance.

3c. Students with disabilities:

Students with disabilities have special education (SPED) teachers, speech therapists, dedicated aides, and classroom protocols and procedures adapted to their needs. The IEPs and 504s are confidential, kept current, and remain in compliance. Teachers maintain student data and is in constant and direct communication with the SPED teacher/contracted providers and parents. The SPED teacher/contracted provider and the general education teacher work together to determine SMART goals for students with disabilities.

3d. English Language Learners:

Each family that enrolls their child into Roots must complete a home language survey. These surveys inform the school of any English Language Learners. Once determined, the students are assessed using the ACCESS WIDA assessment. After the assessment is administered, the school can respond to the data accordingly. English language learners are invited to share their home language with the class. They also have a special education teachers that takes them out of the classroom and works with them personally to strengthen their skill with English.

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

N/A

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Student engagement is Roots' middle name. As a community-based school, Roots fosters a village environment, whereby all students are considered and treated like family. The teachers are referred to as Mama/Baba, as they take on the role of the parents when students are in their care. Each morning starts with the cultural morning circle of love. During this time, students and teachers gather to honor the elders/ancestors, recite pledges, affirmations, and sing songs to celebrate each other. The classrooms are open-space and multi-level, which lends itself to student collaboration and peer engagement. Students are given duties and responsibilities for the classrooms and school community. One of the values of Roots is to "learn so you may teach and teach so you may learn". Students learning from each other in a multi-level classroom can practice this value daily. Students are engaged in their academics through class activities, games, and friendly competitions. Teams are encouraged to collaborate to solve problems. For example, the spelling bee team collaborates to support each other in understanding the pronunciation, meaning, and origin of the vocabulary words. Students assist each other in learning the rules and definitions of words. Students are also engaged in oratorical contests and essay contests. They eagerly engage in science fair exhibitions. They enjoy engaging in learning because learning is fun at Roots Public Charter School. Most students that are enrolled in the pre-primary program remain enrolled through the fifth grade. The culture and climate of Roots is that of advocacy for African and African-American history and culture. The students honor the birthdays of famous cultural heroes, sheroes, and ancestors each month. In addition, the students celebrate cultural holidays (i.e., Kwanzaa, and the birthdays of Dr. King, and Malcolm X). As an alternative to Halloween, Roots celebrates with an African-Centered Masquerade disco. At this event, families come dressed as famous cultural figures. These are the many ways in which Roots has maintained a strong school climate and culture for over twenty years.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Engaging Families and Community is one of the many strengths of the Roots Public Charter School. Families are all part of the Parent Advisory Action Council or Parents Actively Caring (PAC). Administration meets with the council each month to find out what they suggest and want to do to help the school flourish. The parents are engaged through sponsoring a variety of community events and fundraisers. At the beginning of the first semester, parents gather for a cookout/meet and greet. At this event, returning and new families come together for fun activities, food, and fellowship. Also, during the first semester, the PAC sponsors an African-Centered Masquerade disco for the students on October 31st. In the second semester, the PAC sponsors a Black Love Skate party in February, the Mother's Day Market in May, and a family fun day at the end of the school year in June. These events help to raise funds for student activities and programs at Roots. Parents are always welcomed and encouraged to volunteer in the classrooms and/or on field trips. Roots also has parents and community stakeholders as members of its' Board of Directors. Several staff members are also parents or former students. Many of the students begin at three years old and stay through the last grade. Years ago, the last grade was 8th grade, but today it is 5th grade. This high rate of retention allows Roots to maintain engagement with families and communities. The strategy used for a successful community relationship is forming productive partnerships. Roots has a partner relationship with the local district police department, the neighborhood library, the local recreation center, Traditional Expressions African Dance and Drumming organization, DC Handdance Association, Washington Informer Newspaper, Scripps Howard Spelling Bee, the Taratibu Youth Association, and the DC Children's Trust Fund, to mention a few. All these relationships work together to support Roots and maintain a strong bond between families and community.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Creating Professional Culture is important to Roots Public Charter School. We have professional development workshops around the topic and bi-weekly staff meetings that remind us of the importance of professionalism. Roots staff speak respectfully to one another and to families. The students are treated with kindness and respect. Teachers carry themselves in a professional manner and actively participate in their

professional development. In August, there is a two-week pre-service professional development series. During this time, teachers discuss new policies and protocols and receive the staff handbook. Teachers are also given their class rosters, textbooks, teaching materials, digital platforms, and the agenda/calendar for the school year. Each semester Roots provides a full day of professional development. Our professional development workshops consist of important information that guide us and keep us focused on our students and their families. These training courses are opportunities for the curriculum textbook providers to share best practices and offer any technical assistance that teachers may need. It is also an opportunity for teachers to collaborate and review/discuss student data. Aside from the training courses provided by Roots, teachers have access to professional development workshops/webinars through the Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE) and the DC Public Charter School Board (DCPCSB). Throughout the year, there are bi-weekly staff meetings for professional development. During these bi-weekly meetings, teachers receive support with the digital platforms, review student data and discuss best practices. In June, there is a one-week professional development to evaluate the year's growth and progress. This is also the time for staff evaluation and appreciation. Roots Public Charter School ends each school year with a luncheon to express professional appreciation to the staff. Another way teachers demonstrate professionalism is through their membership to various professional organizations, such as National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI) and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Throughout the years, Roots Public Charter School has been chosen to present workshops at annual conferences for NBCDI and NAEYC. Roots is accredited by NAEYC for its early childhood program and Middle States Association for elementary schools. These are some of the many ways Roots creates and maintains a culture of professionalism.

4. School Leadership:

School Leadership is important. The governing body of Roots Public Charter School consists of nine members. They consist of teachers, parents, and community stakeholders. Most of the board members have served for over five years. There are quarterly meetings and annual retreats. The Board is active in studying and setting school policies, providing fundraisers, and engaging in student activities. Some of those activities include sponsorship for the Malcolm X Oratorical contest and judging the schoolwide spelling bee. The principal is the founder and one of the four school administrators of Roots Public Charter School. She has been educating children for over 50 years. The principal earned a doctorate degree in Early and Middle Childhood Education. She leads the school with wisdom and grace. She is the author of the Roots Public Charter School curriculum as well as "Educating Children of African Descent in the 21st Century," *Black Child Journal*, 2017; "The Roots Model, African Centered Education," *African Centered Education: Theory and Practice*, Meyer Education Press, 2020; "How the Roots School System Turned the Pandemic Crisis Into An Educational Opportunity," *Black Child Journal*, 2021; and "African-Centered Ideology: Essential to Aiding Families Through the COVID-19 Crisis and Beyond," *Journal of the Alliance of Black School Educators*, 2021. Of the four school administrators that comprise the leadership team, all have been employed by Roots for over twenty years. The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) is responsible for the fiscal management and operations of the school. This includes, but is not limited to, annual budgets, salaries/payroll, insurance, and benefits. The Vice Principal holds a master's degree in African and African American studies and was one of the founding teachers when Roots opened in 1999. While teaching at Roots, she was honored as the national teacher of the year (2006) by the Milken Family Foundation. Her duties include, but are not limited to, serving as the liaison between the teachers, parents, and the administration, school technology coordinator, dean of students, coordinator of the National School Lunch Program, and the administrator for all schoolwide standardized testing. The Director of Program Compliance is responsible for all reports and data among OSSE, DCPCSB, and Roots Public Charter School.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning is for which Roots Public Charter School stands. The school addresses the diverse needs and backgrounds of the students and families. Roots Public Charter School uses the multi-level grade approach. Regardless of the student's current grade, the student is given work based on his/her working level. Roots Public Charter School also practices 'looping' so that teachers can work with the student for more than one year. Building and maintaining relationships with the students and families for

more than one year is important in addressing the diverse needs, equity, and backgrounds of the students and families. Roots Public Charter School supports cultural awareness of our population which is 100% African descent, either continental African or African American. All the subjects taught at Roots Public Charter School embellish the African Worldview and show how Africa is the mother of civilization. Washington, DC is considered a 'safe haven' for immigrants, therefore when enrolling families, it is not a requirement to know their immigration status, and we accept all interested families who apply through the DC lottery system, www.myschooldc.org. Various students from other countries, who are English Language Learners (ELL), are welcomed and shown respect for their native language. Parents are invited to share their language, food, and culture with their child's class. Roots Public Charter School also serves many families that have been displaced. To support these families, Roots Public Charter School receives funding from the McKinney-Vento program to assist with costs related to transportation, uniforms, etc. Roots has a student support team (SST), comprised of teachers and an administrator, that responds to the unique needs of students/families. These are some of the ways that Roots Public Charter School addresses the diverse needs of the students and families. Also, these are the ways Roots Public Charter School is culturally responsive in our teaching and learning.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

Roots Public Charter School provides multiple research-based strategies for success, however, the one practice that has been the most instrumental to the school's success is the Africentric value system, i.e., relationship. At Roots Public Charter School, the Nguzo Saba (Seven Principles) is the foundation of the Africentric value system. Umoja (unity), to strive to be in unity with our families, staff, and community. Kujichagulia (self-determination), to speak for oneself, curriculum, and African-Centered worldview. Ujima (collective work and responsibility), each is responsible to do their part. Ujamaa (cooperative economics), support each other's businesses and financial welfare. Nia (purpose), define and focus our goals on a particular principle each day. Kuumba (creativity), strive to create the best circumstances available. Strive to think out of the box for the greater good. Imani (faith), have faith in the supreme God and in oneself and others who show that the God-force is within them. In practice, umoja is demonstrated by the student/family relationships forged over the years. Most students remain together throughout their tenure at Roots Public Charter School. Kujichagulia is demonstrated by students having agency over their voice and participating in developing class rules and one's learning experience. Ujima is experienced through collaborative efforts of PAC (Parents Actively Caring). The parent body works collectively and responsibly with the administration and the teachers to ensure a well-rounded learning experience for the students. Ujamaa is demonstrated through Roots partnerships with local agencies and businesses that support its mission and vision. Nia is demonstrated by the teachers' daily purpose and commitment to provide quality education. For students, nia speaks to their willingness to take what is being taught seriously and apply it to real life. Kuumba is the creative strategy that teachers use to engage students. Students are encouraged to use their creative juices in displaying what they learned i.e., through songs, dramatic presentations, and student projects. Imani is demonstrated by the faith the school has in the students and the faith the parents and students have in Roots Public Charter School. Most importantly, the Africentric value system continues to be the foundation for excellence demonstrating the teaching and learning dynamic of working respectfully and engaging all entities involved.