

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

---

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Lissa Hines

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

Official School Name Hillcrest Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 30 Marguerite Drive

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

City Oakland State CA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 94618-2230

County Alameda County

Telephone (510) 654-6590 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL http://www.hillcrestpta.org E-mail sherry.segura@ousd.org

Twitter Handle \_\_\_\_\_ Facebook Page http://www.facebook.com/hillcrestscho  
https://twitter.com/HillcrestOak olouds/ Google+ \_\_\_\_\_

YouTube/URL \_\_\_\_\_ Blog \_\_\_\_\_ Other Social Media Link \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Superintendent\*Superintendent Antwan D. Wilson E-mail Antwan.Wilson@ousd.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Oakland Unified School District Tel. (510) 879-1270

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 President James Harris  
(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, write N/A in the space.*

## Part I – Eligibility Certification

---

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

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

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

---

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

### DISTRICT

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

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

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

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	26	25	51
1	23	20	43
2	24	24	48
3	27	23	50
4	29	16	45
5	18	23	41
6	14	17	31
7	12	20	32
8	8	20	28
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	181	188	369

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 11 % Asian
  - 8 % Black or African American
  - 8 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 59 % White
  - 14 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 2%

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	7
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	0
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	7
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	360
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.019
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 13 %  
31 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Spanish, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin (Putonghua), Japanese, French, Turkish, Romanian, Swedish, Norwegian, and Farsi.

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 11 %  
Total number students who qualify: 22
8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %  
20 Total number of students served

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

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	15
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	7
Paraprofessionals	2
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	0

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 24:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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

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

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

At Hillcrest School, we seek to develop our students both as individuals and as members of a global society. We encourage our children to take an interest in others as well as in the world around them; thereby promoting curiosity and a passion for learning.

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

## PART III – SUMMARY

---

Hillcrest School, built in 1950, is nestled in the East Bay Oakland hills of the San Francisco Bay area. Its unassuming exterior belies the fact that it is one of the most sought after schools in Oakland. Native plants grow in our California Native Plant Garden in the front of the school and our beautiful garden spaces are tended by the students and parent volunteers. On any given weekend, you can find families on our playground from the community at large riding bicycles, playing basketball or climbing on the play structure.

Home of the Cardinals, Hillcrest is an exceptional school with a unique K-8th grade configuration. Hillcrest was the first K-8 school in the Oakland Unified School District and this is just one of our many strengths. After the great Oakland Hills firestorm in 1991, Hillcrest became a K-8 school in an effort to lure back families that decided to move away after losing their homes. Now serving 369 students, Hillcrest has nearly doubled its size since the early nineties and is representative of the catchment area. Of our 369 students, 312 students live in the catchment area and 57 students live in a variety of neighborhoods around Oakland proper. Our students benefit from this resilient community that has remained consistent with rules, familiar teachers, supportive adults and a close community of families.

We pride ourselves on being a “second home” to our 369 kindergarten through eighth grade students, where each student feels safe, valued and supported. Students are greeted each morning by our fourth and fifth grade who serve on the Hillcrest Safety Patrol, greeting each and every student who is walking to school or who are using our valet service while being dropped off via an automobile. We begin each week with our Monday Morning Circle, recognizing the accomplishments and efforts of our students, staff, parents, and caregivers. Hillcrest has worked hard to purposefully create a culture where students thrive in a healthy environment that honors the value of learning. Students at Hillcrest know that working hard ensures good grades, asking good questions shows that they are engaged and curious, and doing your homework is the “right thing” to do. Students at Hillcrest School are immersed in a standards-driven core-curriculum, balanced in skill development, conceptual understanding and application of knowledge. Through the integration of the Caring Schools Community curriculum, our students learn to be self-aware, develop respect for each other and take ownership for their learning and behavior. As a result, our campus provides a physically and emotionally safe space for all of our students, where students exhibit a wonderfully positive attachment to their school community.

Our amazingly positive school culture has allowed us to fashion an exceptional learning environment where all of our stakeholders expect not only a high level of behavioral standards, but high academic achievement as well. Hillcrest students have consistently performed well on the California Standardized Tests of the past and are replicating those results with the new California Assessments of Student Performance and Progress.

Hillcrest School is comprised of many stakeholders, including active and supportive parents, community organizations and an incredibly dedicated teaching staff and faculty. Everyone is encouraged to get involved and to maximize the Hillcrest experience. Hillcrest parents attach an extremely high value to rigorous academic programs and positive social and emotional growth. Our parent community is well established and provides strong support to Hillcrest School by contributing time and other resources to help achieve the school's educational goals. The Hillcrest PTA, which boasts a 90% membership, plans and implements a wide variety of programs, activities for children, families, and staff members; which also helps to provide a sense of community to the school. Although we are competitive in terms of our performance and holding ourselves to a high standard, we are quick to remember that we are about children and do our best to make sure that students are at the heart of everything we do.

With high levels of student achievement, a safe campus, strong student support systems, dedication toward implementation of cutting-edge best practices, dedicated staff of collaborative educational professionals, and incredible extracurricular and enrichment programs, we believe that Hillcrest consistently provides an outstanding education for all of its students. Hillcrest K-8 School is dedicated to continuous improvement and the fulfillment of the school’s mission: Seeking to develop our students both as individuals and as members of a global society; encouraging our children to take an interest in others as well as in the world around them; thereby promoting curiosity and a passion for learning.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

---

### 1. Core Curriculum:

All of the core instructional materials used in our classrooms are approved by the State of California and are aligned with the California Common Core State Standards. Our teachers have embraced these new curricular changes and continue to work towards further understanding the deeper intent of the philosophy of the Common Core shifts into all content areas.

Although the primary text for our English Language Arts program is the SRA Open Court Reading program, we believe in a balanced literacy program and have implemented the methodology of Reader's and Writer's Workshops, based on the work of Lucy Calkins and the Columbia Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project. This workshop structure includes an explicit mini-lesson, a teaching point, modeling, guided practice, independent practice and a published work product. Our goal at Hillcrest is for all of our students to become fluent, independent readers and writers. Differentiation is addressed in each classroom through strategy groups, individual conferences and targeted acceleration. By the time our students will leave us after completing the eighth grade, Hillcrest students have engaged in analytical, argumentative, expository, narrative and persuasive writing assignments. Technology in writing is infused in all of our third through eighth grade classrooms, with students collaborating, producing and publishing their writing using Google Docs.

At Hillcrest, we aim to develop our students' mathematical abilities, including but not limited conceptual and procedural understanding, through structured problem solving experiences. In our kindergarten and first grades, Hillcrest has participated in a US Department of Education study under the leadership of Dr. Akihiko Takahashi, DePaul University, which has permitted these grade levels to use Japanese Mathematics textbooks and their lesson design study approach to teaching mathematics to our youngest students. In second through fifth grades, this structured problem solving mathematics approach is used to create interest in mathematics and encourage creative mathematical activity and discussion through students' collaborative work, primarily using the district-adopted Mathematics Expressions Common Core series for these grade levels. Long before California adopted the Common Core State Standards, our teachers were quick to embrace the Standards for Mathematical Practice and emphasize critical thinking, perseverance and justification. Silicon Valley Math Institute (SVMI) problem sets to challenge students with the curriculum. All students in kindergarten through eighth grades participate in performance tasks, real world application problems, and collaborative work groups. In our middle school, we currently offer the following courses: Common Core Math 6, Common Core Math 7, Common Core Math 8 and Advanced Algebra. Guided by the Common Core mathematics standards, pathways for acceleration allow high achieving students to complete a high-school level Algebra 1 compression course before enrolling in ninth grade.

The Hillcrest science curriculum includes inquiry-based labs coupled with exceptional hands-on activities. We use the District-adopted FOSS science curriculum in kindergarten through fifth grades and the CPO science curriculum program in sixth through eighth grades. Complimenting our science program, Hillcrest has made a commitment to the protection and conservation of its local watersheds, the world's ocean, and special ocean areas, such as national marine sanctuaries; and is a nationally recognized National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Ocean Guardian School. Students have developed and created school-wide conservation projects, such as repurposing PET bottles into sub-irrigated planters and planters for drought-resistant plants. The science curriculum is also enhanced with supplemental activities, such as ecoliteracy studies, curriculum-based field trips and our annual science fair. Our focused efforts in science have resulted in 82% of our fifth-grade students and 85% of our eighth graders testing at proficient and advanced levels as measured by the 2015 California Standardized Tests in science.

Social studies and history standards are taught in correlation with the Common Core English language arts and literacy standards. Students are taught how to analyze informational text features, decipher and cite credible sources, extract and summarize key ideas and details, and interpret scientific and historical relationships and patterns. We work hard to bring our social studies instruction history to life! Our district-adopted curriculum combined with field trips, guest speakers, and supplemental resources enrich students'

global perspective and understanding of the world around them. For example, you can find fifth-graders "living" like colonists, through role-playing, enduring taxes, and creating laws. Fourth-grade students replicate the gold rush experience with a three-day overnight adventure to Coloma, while third-grade students gain a deeper understanding of our local Oakland community through Oakland "Living History" days. The combination of these experiences provides our students exposure to a diverse, interdependent, and changing world.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At Hillcrest School, we firmly believe that access to quality arts programs contribute to the overall intellectual, physical, and emotional well-being of our children. Fortunately, because of our amazing parent community who provides 100% of the funding for these amazing programs, we are able to provide incredible enrichment opportunities to all of our students. Hillcrest students enjoy music, art, library, and technology classes weekly, paid for in its entirety by our wonderful Parent Teacher Association. Our students also participate in kinesthetic education, which complements our physical education program, in order to learn structured movement activities, group games, and promotes positive interactions on the playground. Additionally, students in grades 6-8 study Spanish, with many students leaving Hillcrest testing into higher Spanish classes for high school. All of these programs are valued as a part of every Hillcrest child's scholastic experience and speak to teaching and reaching the whole child.

Our music program is taught to all students in kindergarten through eighth grades. Our students enjoy the hands-on experience of playing drums, bells, thumb pianos and electric keyboards, all of which culminate in an end of year musical celebration performed for the community at large. Kindergarten and first-grade teachers also incorporate music throughout the day during instructional activities such as calendar, circle-time, and during Caring School Community class meetings. The school's annual variety show provides another opportunity for children to showcase talents that might not otherwise be recognized within the school day. Upwards of fifty students audition in acts as varied as comedy routines, dances, instrument playing, and magic tricks.

The Hillcrest art program gives all of our students the opportunity to demonstrate their creativity while using a variety of mediums and media. We believe that building a child's visual literacy skills is imperative to a student having a well-rounded education and will be crucial in meeting the needs of the workforce of tomorrow. Walking through the Hillcrest hallways, community members can view student art inspired by Georgia O'Keeffe, Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Klee, and Chuck Close, and many others. Students are able to delve into their own creativity and visual literacy as they explore foundational concepts like "tints and shades", "warm and cool colors", and then apply these ideas to their own art-making. Students at Hillcrest truly see themselves as artists and are proud to explain their artistic statements and pieces to our community at the annual end of year art and music night.

The Hillcrest School library program serves to instill a love of reading, inspire life-long learning, and foster independent library use. Students visit once a week with their class to check out materials and to practice information literacy skills and digital citizenship. The library is an inviting space where students may acquire knowledge and gain insight; a welcoming haven where children may seek respite from a demanding day; and an overall stimulating place where students may peruse books and media at designated times before, during and after school hours.

Technology instruction is a part of the instructional week for all students at Hillcrest. Our students use technology as a tool to enhance learning, problem-solving, communication, productivity, creativity and to collaborate with one another. With four Google Chromebook carts and one iPad cart for all of our students, as well as a one-to-one Chromebook program in fourth through eighth grades, Hillcrest students have the opportunity to not only use technology during tech class, but throughout the school day.

Our physical education program enriches our academic curriculum through a sequential, progressive and unique physical education curriculum that is used as an exemplar within the Oakland Unified School District. Students participate in bimonthly, mile-long runs around beautiful Lake Temescal, emphasizing

the importance students achieving their personal best and focusing on their cardiovascular health. Hillcrest is proud that their physical fitness scores are well above the state and national average.\

Research shows that a large number of people engage in fitness-enhancing physical activity because of the joy they feel while interacting socially with fellow competitors and teammates. With this research in mind, our kinesthetic education (KE) program was purposefully designed to complement our physical education program. The goal for our students during KE is to be able to learn how to play a number of playground games in a safe and inclusive setting and learning how to solve conflicts with grace from a menu of rehearsed strategies that are introduced and practiced during their KE session. It is our belief that our students, after learning how to play these games and activities, will demonstrate the confidence to participate and play in these games during their recess times because of their knowledge of the rules and skills to recruit teammates.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Our educational program at Hillcrest school provides our students with many opportunities to practice and refine skills through cooperative learning activities, tiered lessons that meet our students' diverse learning styles, classroom learning centers and workshop models. Using classroom, grade-level, and District benchmark assessments as our guide, Hillcrest teachers design dynamic lessons that incorporate differentiated and scaffolded instructional strategies. For example, one might walk by a first grade classroom and find that there are some students who are working on an iPad, actively engaged in a customizable Reading Horizon lesson to master most common words; another group working independently on word work; a small group of children working with a teacher in a guided reading workshop group; while another group can be found playing a game that is informally assessing their understanding of long and short vowels. Our teachers are skilled in providing what is needed for each and every student he/she serves, whether targeted intervention or acceleration.

Technology-based supports also play an integral part of our approach to differentiating the curriculum at Hillcrest School. On any given day, you will find that our Hillcrest staff has actively embedded technology into their curricula. For example, students in a sixth-grade mathematics class will be independently using an individualized Khan Academy module on their Chromebooks, while the teacher works with a small group to solidify a particular math concept being taught in class. One might walk down the hall and visit a fifth-grade science class, where students are taking a Kahoot quiz, receiving immediate feedback on concepts they have learned well and which concepts they have yet to master. Further down the hall, you will find a fourth grade English language arts class with students making word clouds for the Latin and Greek roots they are studying, seamlessly infusing both art and technology. Eighth grade students in our algebra compression class will be using a graphing calculator app on their Chromebooks while studying functions and their graphical representations. This intentionality around infusing technology supports for our students has led to an increase in student engagement across the school.

Hillcrest School also boasts exceptional special education resource and Autism spectrum inclusion programs. This team of teachers collaborates with their students' classroom teachers, paraprofessionals and the school administrator to address each of their students' individual needs, including successful strategies for successfully maintaining our fully-inclusive classrooms. Our unique departmentalization model in second through eighth grades, also allows for articulation across grade levels and collaboration between the bells for both regular and special education teachers to effectively meet the needs of all their students.

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

At Hillcrest School, we believe that meaningful assessment is fundamental to powerful instruction and student achievement. We use multiple assessments and the corresponding end-of-year expectancies from the Common Core State Standards to help us determine whether or not our students, as well as our subgroups, are making the expected progress needed to master grade-level standards. In English Language Arts, our teachers in kindergarten through fifth grade use the one-on-one Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System to reliably assess and match students' instructional and independent reading abilities. Kindergarten and first grade teachers also use the DIBELS assessment tool. In second through eighth

grades, the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) is used to determine students' lexile reading levels and is administered three times a year. In the middle grades, our students also take District benchmark assessments in writing three times a year.

In mathematics, students are given the Scholastic Mathematics Inventory (SMI) twice a year in second through eighth grades. District cumulative end-of-unit benchmark assessments are also administered to students in kindergarten through eighth grades three times a year. In third through fifth grades, Hillcrest students are preparing for the rigors of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and increasing their opportunities to engage in CCSS-aligned language and literacy skill activities with an internal OUSD benchmark, called the Science Instructional Reflection Assessment (SIRA). This assessment tool has been invaluable in helping our teachers to accurately assess learning of each FOSS module.

Our faculty uses the data points from these many assessments to pinpoint exactly who is not meeting, or is at risk of not meeting, grade level standards. Interventions and acceleration plans are then developed for these focal students, a practice which has contributed to our consistent success over the years at Hillcrest. We make it a point to work closely with our parents, most especially with those who have students who may be struggling, communicating with them frequently via academic conferences, email, phone calls and through our Student Success Team (SST) process. We believe this approach has had a tremendous impact on reaching struggling students and making the gains needed for them to make benchmark goals.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

---

### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Hillcrest School embraces a culture of mutual respect between our students and staff members. Together, teachers and parents provide students with many strategies for building community and creating a sense of belonging. We are intentional about implementing a balanced approach to behavior management and use the nationally-recognized Caring School Community program to strengthen and build both our classroom and school-wide community. It is our belief that when we focus on strengthening our students' connectedness to school, that we will increase academic motivation and achievement, reducing the need for drug or alcohol abuse, violence and delinquency. Many teachers also use "bucket filling" to encourage and promote positive behaviors by using the concept of an invisible bucket to show their students how easy and rewarding it is to express kindness, appreciation and love by "filling buckets." Other teachers, especially those in the middle school, use the practice of mindfulness to begin each class period, setting the tone for learning before each class period begins.

We love to recognize and award students who exemplify our core beliefs and who choose to do the right thing, especially when others aren't watching. At Hillcrest, we believe that students should be intrinsically motivated to choose to do "the right thing." Every year, the school administrator finds a way to recognize and motivate students. From collecting charms that encourage students to be homework heroes, super scientists, marvelous bookworms, etc., to this year's backpack "brag tags" that students receive for improving grades, showing integrity, etc., we are continually searching for ways to build self-esteem, empathy, tolerance curiosity and good will at every opportunity.

As a K-8 school, we continually look for ways to integrate "buddy systems" across the grade levels. These buddy experiences help our students to form positive relationships, with the older students serving as role models and protectors to our younger students. Classroom buddy reading programs, cross-grade level tutoring programs and other intentional opportunities to pair students have created leadership opportunities for both older and younger students to thrive. For example, one of our students in our Autism Inclusion Support Program is extremely terrified when we have fire alarm drills. One of our middle school students, who assists the principal to coordinate these drills, has taken this student as his "assistant" to help him to manage his noise sensitivity and phobia of loud sounds. These personal connections between our older and younger students are sure to last a lifetime and encouraging empathy in our older students.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

The most successful way that Hillcrest School works with parents and organizations is through volunteer networks and contract service providers. Our middle school students have the opportunity to spend a week every year with the Naturalists-at-Large program, which takes students to a different National Park every year. By the time our middle schoolers leave us after eighth grade, they have had the opportunity to visit three different National Parks that cover the three different environments native to California: ocean, mountain and desert. NatureBridge is another organization that we work closely with at Hillcrest School. Students in the fifth grade visit the Marin Headlands for a three-day learning adventure that connects them with the beauty of nature in a seaside environment. Fourth grade students visit the Coloma Outdoor Discovery School to celebrate the culture, music, and folklore of the California Gold Rush, while using authentic lessons of the past to awaken students' interest and sense of responsibility for the environment.

Our extensive communications network has kept Hillcrest parents abreast of what is happening at school and in the classrooms. We communicate through email blasts, school-wide texts, classroom newsletters, and our weekly school Yellow Pages in order to keep our community informed. As a school, we also use a web-and-mobile based service called Konstella, which our Parent Teacher Association uses to streamline communications, increase volunteerism & foster a close-knit parent community.

Parents and teachers also communicate during parent-teacher conferences and meet informally before and after school hours. The school administrator welcomes parents and families to Back-to-School Nights,

Open House, kindergarten school tours and School Site Council meetings. At our school tours, the principal presents information about our school and programs and tours the campus with prospective parents. These tours allow visitors to see our school in action and ask questions, with the overall goal being to ease parents' anxieties about starting elementary school.

### 3. Professional Development:

One of our core beliefs at Hillcrest School is that high-quality instruction is the cornerstone of student achievement and growth, and as such, making sure that we have robust, professional development opportunities for our staff is of the utmost importance. All professional development is aligned with the California Common Core State Standards, Next Generation Science Standards and our annual goals as defined in our School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA). This year, much of our professional development has been around making our Readers Workshop model more robust and aligned with the Lucy Calkins' Reading Units of Study, as well as enhancing student engagement and motivation through incorporating more technology into our daily lessons and practice. Hillcrest implemented a 1:1 Chromebook device program this past August in fourth through eighth grades, which has really nurtured individual learning experiences for our students and pushed our practice to becoming more digitally savvy teachers.

Across the Oakland Unified School District, teachers meet every Wednesday for dedicated professional development opportunities at our individual school sites. We believe that our staff epitomizes what it means to work as a professional learning community (PLC). During this time, Hillcrest teachers meet as grade-level teams, content-specific teams or as a faculty to share best instructional practices with one another, analyze data and develop progress monitoring plans for individual students, calibrate student work samples or backwards mapping of different curricular units or learning how to use the new data systems found that have been purchased by our school district.

We believe as a staff that we all have much to contribute from one another. This belief is shared by our school district with the "teacher leader model" that is in place. Each month, teacher leaders attend monthly trainings in English language arts, mathematics, science, history and technology and share their learnings with the rest of the staff during our meetings. This practice has been able to build the capacity of the group as a whole and not just the designated staff members who attend these District trainings.

Our PTA has been instrumental in partnering with the school administration in helping to provide our teachers with amazing professional development opportunities over the last couple of year. Our teachers have been able to participate in week long trainings with Debbie Diller around the balanced literacy model, Akhiko Takahashi from DePaul University for in-depth problem solving experiences in mathematics lessons, and Reading Horizons, who have helped to build our knowledge base around phonetic instruction. The Hillcrest Parent Teacher Association realizes that in general, professional development programs are designed to change teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and practice in various content areas; and when we invest in our teachers, we are investing in improved learning opportunities and outcomes for our students.

### 4. School Leadership:

At Hillcrest School, school leadership begins with the school principal and is shared among the School Site Council, Faculty Council, curriculum teacher leaders and the PTA. Guided by our mission, this shared leadership model provides opportunities for all our stakeholders to explore and give input regarding programs and services that impact the school's curriculum and climate.

The school principal is a visible presence on the Hillcrest campus, whether greeting parents and students at our morning drop-off "student valet service" in the morning, supervising lunchtimes in the multipurpose room or observing teaching and learning in our classrooms. She has been instrumental in setting the tone to make sure that our school building is welcoming for our Hillcrest families and that each and every student who walks through the door feels included and a part of the school. The principal has an open door policy, taking the time to meet with students, parents and teachers as needed. This proactive approach towards the overall running of the school has helped to increase the efficiency of time spent at various

school meetings, making sure that our focus remains on students and their needs rather than on the minutia of day to day school matters.

The School Site Council meets every six to eight weeks, with its primary job to oversee the School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) and allocate resources to support the plan. Aside from the principal, all other members of the SSC are elected by their peers to serve a two-year term on the council. The elected members include parents, certificated staff, classified staff and a school community member. This team allows a place for school and community to come together with equal voices regarding decisions that impact the entire school. All meetings are public and anyone is invited to attend, however, only elected members of the council are allowed to vote.

Hillcrest's curriculum leaders consist of teacher leaders in English language arts, mathematics, science, technology and social-emotional learning. This team meets with other district school leaders monthly to discuss and review curriculum, best practices, student data, professional development and other learnings that they bring back to the school site and share with the faculty.

The Parent Teacher Association provides leadership for the school by funding projects and programming that support the academic and social development of all of our students. Community events include ice cream socials, parent education nights, our spring walkathon and annual fall auction and benefit. Programming for the arts, field trip scholarships and providing our teachers and their students with classroom resources are just a few of the ways that our PTA supports academic learning. Throughout the year, our PTA parent members coordinate teacher appreciation and hospitality events, donation drives and augment school programming as necessary.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

---

One of the academic structures that we believe has made Hillcrest School so successful over the past few years is our unique departmentalization model, which exists in our second through eighth-grade classrooms. Given the need for teachers to truly make a successful transition to the California Common Core State Standards, we felt that having teachers become content area specialists in two subjects, English Language Arts and social studies or mathematics and science; would allow for teachers to be able to strategically plan and integrate across subject areas in a deeper and more meaningful way. With a focus on these newer standards, we also felt this would permit our teachers to really be able to dive deeply in their chosen content areas.

Each grade level at Hillcrest has two teachers and both teachers see all students in their particular grade level each and every day. Both content area and targeted grade-level planning time is given to teachers each week in order to allow for collaboration time within specific content areas and to make sure that they are being intentional about teaching each and every standard. One of the benefits of this model has been that the teachers see all students across the grade level as theirs, not just those students who are in their homeroom classes. Teachers have shared that they are better able to see their students as mathematicians, scientists, and humanities scholars; and sharing with one another how best to reach and teach the students they serve.

Specific grade level expectations, team parent-teacher conferences and remarkably positive outcomes for our students who are served by our special education team are just a few of the benefits that we have observed with this model. It gives all students, and most especially those who need a positive reason for movement, a chance to move around during the day and for teachers to be really strategic about a team approach in order to meet the needs their identified needs. One teacher shared recently, "I love having a thought partner to do the problem solving with me and sharing what has worked in her classroom. She will say to me, 'I have found something that is really working for this particular student and helps him with his executive functioning in my room. If I do this and I do that, he really gets it.' Then, we can work together to make sure that we are using the same approach with the student while he is in my room for math and science and in her room for English Language Arts and social studies."