

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Michael McAllister

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

Official School Name Daniel Butler School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 90 White Street

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

City Belmont State MA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 02478-4916

County Middlesex County

Telephone (617) 993-5550 Fax (617) 484-7921

Web site/URL http://www.belmont.k12.ma.us/butler/ E-mail mmcallister@belmont.k12.ma.us

Twitter Handle _____ Facebook Page https://www.facebook.com/DanielButlerPTA/?fref=ts

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____ Google+ _____
Other Social Media Link http://www.belmont.k12.ma.us/butler/pta/

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*Mr. John Phelan E-mail jphelan@belmont.k12.ma.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Belmont Public Schools Tel. (617) 993-5400

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

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mrs. Laurie Slap
(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):
- 4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 6 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	36	31	67
1	51	36	87
2	33	39	72
3	35	34	69
4	39	28	67
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	194	168	362

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 26 % Asian
 - 5 % Black or African American
 - 7 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 55 % White
 - 6 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 8%

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	13
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	15
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	28
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	341
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.082
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	8

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 16 %
57 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
A more telling statistic than ELL participation is FLNE (First Language Not English) population. As of October 1, 2015 33.3% (121 students) come from a household that speaks a language other than English. Accordingly, there are 31 languages spoken by Butler School students at home: Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Bengali, Bujarati, Bulgarian, Chinese, English, Farsi, French, Ganda, German, Greek, Haitian, Hebrew, Hindi, Indian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Nepali, Pelugu, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Tamil, and Urdu.

As of October 1, 2015 Butler School students came from 27 different countries: Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Ethiopia, France, Gaslavia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Nepal, Pakistan, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and USA.

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 21 %
Total number students who qualify: 75
8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %
27 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.

- 3 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 9 Other Health Impaired
- 7 Specific Learning Disability

- 1 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 7 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 7
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	16
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	7
Paraprofessionals	6
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 22:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

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

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

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

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

We are dedicated to providing a school community where students will acquire the foundational skills, knowledge, and behaviors needed for life-long learning. We believe this can best be achieved in an environment characterized by mutual respect and shared responsibility. Our success is built on a partnership of teachers who are committed to their profession and families who ensure their children come to school ready to learn. We expect everybody, every day, to be "Respectful, Responsible, and Ready to Learn."

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

Today Butler is home to an increasingly diverse school population of roughly three hundred and sixty students. While it still includes some long-time local families who have attended for three or more generations, it is also home to students from many different countries. The result is rich mixture of backgrounds and cultures.

Butler is the second smallest school in the district with only 8% of the district's overall population, yet...
...it is a school with unparalleled diversity: Butler students come from 26 different states, 27 different countries, and speak 31 different languages.
...it has 20% of the entire district's total Limited English Proficient (LEP) population
...it has 14% of the entire district's FLNE population
...it is one of only two Title I designated schools in Belmont
...it has 17% of the entire district's total Low Income (F/R) population
...it traditionally has the highest number of homeless students, compared to any other school in Belmont
...it has the highest percentage of non-White students, compared to any other school in Belmont

Even in comparison to its elementary peer schools in Belmont...
...it has twice as many Low Income students as Burbank and Winn Brook combined, and 11 more Low Income students than Wellington (a school with 209 more students than Butler)
...it has more FLNE students than Burbank and Winn Brook combined, and only 24 fewer FLNE students than Wellington (a school with 209 more students than Butler)
...it has the highest number of Limited English Proficient students

The Daniel Butler Elementary School has been housed in two buildings during its history. The first building stood at the corner of Trapelo and Waverly Street. This structure was built in 1873 and was initially called the Waverly Village School. In 1895 the Belmont School Committee renamed it honor of the area's most distinguished citizen of the time, Daniel Butler.

Born in Connecticut in 1808, Reverend Butler was a graduate of both Yale University and the Andover Theological Seminary. After serving a church in Dorchester, he moved to Belmont in 1865 and would spend the rest of his life on Sycamore Street in a house across the street from the current Butler School. He was for many years the president of the American Bible Association. He also served his new community in a number of capacities. Among these was membership on the Belmont School Committee and two-terms as the town's representative to the state legislature. He passed away in 1893. However, the tradition of service lived on in his family. His son Henry was principal of Belmont High School from 1881 through 1899.

By the late 1800's the school age population of Waverly Village had outgrown the first Butler school. Construction on the second building, our current home, to become Butler school was completed in 1900. Continued increases in the number of students attending the school required two additions to the original structure, one in the 1920's and one in the late 1940's. A final renovation was undertaken in the early 1980's at which time the gym and link area of the school were added. Butler is the oldest town building still in service. Today it combines a classical facade with an updated interior. The result is a school building of singular charm.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Butler's language arts program includes instruction in reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking. Instruction in these key areas is integrated with all other areas of the curriculum. Teachers guide students as they master new strategies in different contexts and gradually release responsibility to students as they practice these strategies independently. Instruction takes place throughout the day in a variety of grouping patterns (whole group, small group, individual) and in a variety of situations (a read aloud, shared reading, interactive writing, guided reading and writing, independent reading and writing, and reading and writing across the content areas). In Grades 1 and 2 we use the Houghton-Mifflin Reading curriculum. In Grades K, 3, and 4 we use an organic curriculum that nonetheless includes specific teaching in the following areas: developing an awareness of the processes of reading and writing, increasing knowledge of the print-sound code and standard writing conventions, understanding the purposes and genres used in text, and developing habits of lifelong readers and writers.

Butler's mathematics program begins with the recognition that students come to school with a surprising amount of mathematical experience and intuition. By linking the teaching of mathematics to students' personal experiences, our math program helps students develop and master their basic number facts (i.e. fact fluency), apply their knowledge to real world situations (i.e. problem solving), and communicate mathematically (i.e. conceptual understanding); what math research defines as "the mathematical tripod." In Grades K-4 we use the enVision mathematics curriculum, in alignment with the entire Belmont Public School District.

Butler's science program requires students to study unifying concepts and processes in science, science as inquiry, physical science, life science, earth and space science, and science and technology. As national and state standards for science education are changing, we are in the midst of a massive overhaul of our science curriculum. As such, in Grades K-4 we do not currently use a set science curriculum, in alignment with the entire Belmont Public School District.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Butler has a library/media center, a gymnasium, a cafeteria, music and art rooms, outdoor play structure, playing area and field. Computers are available in all classrooms and in the library/media center. In addition to the basic curriculum, learning is enriched on a regular basis through special events and activities.

Our visual arts curriculum provides students with rich opportunities in developing skills and knowledge in both creating art and responding to art. The program also promotes awareness and understanding of the connections between visual art and other arts and disciplines through the study of the arts of other cultures and historical periods. Through our art curriculum, students also come to understand the purpose of the arts as a means of personal expression, as well as its role in our daily lives. Each student in Grades K-4 has art one time per week.

Our music curriculum focuses on skills related to music literacy, which we define as the ability to perform and create music, to perceive and understand music, and to comprehend the powerful connections between music and the world around us. Our music teacher articulates this paradigm for comprehensive music education through a curriculum with clearly defined skills, concepts and understandings. Each student in Grades K-4 has General Music two times per week. Instrumental Music is an elective music program that is available to students in Grades 3 & 4 and meets one time per week. It is different than the general music program, which is part of the regular music curriculum and includes all students.

Our physical education curriculum exposes students to experiences that allow them to enjoy physical activity. Through effective practices students learn the value of physical activity and its role in life-long health and well-being. The curriculum is well-balanced, incorporating forms of movement (i.e. basic tumbling skills), applied movement (i.e. how to throw a Frisbee), and health (i.e. stretching or finding your

pulse). Finally, the development of personal skills is an essential part of our physical education program. To this end, students are given opportunities to develop basic social skills, including teamwork, problem solving, leadership and communication. Each student in Grades K-4 has physical education two times per week.

In grades K and 1, students attend a library class one time per week for 30 minutes. This day is considered a “special” in their schedule and is lead by our Library Aide; their teacher is not present. During library time students in Grades K-1 will listen to a story read aloud by our Librarian, a Class Assistant, or a parent. Read alouds are followed by an opportunity for students to browse for a book they would like to check out. Alternatively, the librarian provides activities related to the selected read aloud titles.

In grades 2-4, students attend library less predictably (1 time per week if possible, typically for less than 30 minutes) as it is not considered a “special” in their schedule. Their teacher is in attendance at all times. During library time students in Grades 2-4 may participate in any of the above activities, as well as engage in teacher-directed research or participate in book talks with their peers.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

At the Daniel Butler School, we are committed to teaching all children. This commitment begins with the firm belief that all students are capable of learning our curriculums, and that all students belong in our classrooms. We recognize that not all students will learn at the same time, at the same pace, as the result of the same type of instruction. Therefore, we use a multi-tiered model of teaching known as Response to Intervention (RtI). RtI is a Regular Education initiative and should not be confused with Special Education, which prescribes specialized instruction by specially trained teachers.

The purpose of RtI is to identify and support students in the areas of literacy, mathematics, and/or behavior. Our identification process for students begins with high-quality core instruction that occurs within the general education classroom. Teachers, themselves, take responsibility for all students – those who struggle and require remediation, those who are excelling and require enrichment, and everyone in between. In addition to that classroom instruction several assessments are conducted to ensure that students are mastering what is being taught. We call this “Tier I” instruction and most of our students demonstrate progress in this level.

If a student needs additional support to learn, in addition to classroom instruction, they are provided with interventions that includes more targeted instruction. Not all students learn the same way, so we understand that we need to teach differently to reach different learners. Learning research, as well as our own experiences and class observations, show that this kind of support assists students in reaching proficiency. These interventions are still part of the Regular Education program, in addition to classroom instruction, and are provided primarily by Classroom Teachers, Class Assistants and Professional Aides. As children receive intervention, we see how they respond through several assessments to monitor their progress. We call this “Tier II” instruction and most of the students who receive intervention demonstrate progress in this level.

If a student does not respond to the intervention instruction they receive and needs additional support we begin to look towards more specialized instruction by a Specialist Teachers. We call this “Tier III” instruction and fewer students require this level. Tier III is generally provided by Specialists such as Reading Teachers, School Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, and Speech/Language Therapists, and is still part of the Regular Education Program.

It is important to note that students who receive several tiers of intervention receive all tiers of instruction; it is not an either/or program. At whatever level of intervention students are placed, all students receive high-quality core instruction that occurs within the general education classroom every day.

IEP services, which are not part of the RtI process but rather the Special Education process, are provided by Special Education Teachers.

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

At the Butler School we use a complex network of assessments that provide student learning data to educators. We use benchmark assessments such as DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills). We use diagnostic assessments such as the PASI (Phonemic Awareness Screener Inventory). We use formative assessments such as FUNdations end-of-topic tests. We use summative assessments such as enVision math unit assessments. We use informal, in-the-moment assessments such as turn & talk opportunities or think/pair/share exercises. We use all of this data to make important instructional and support decisions throughout day, week, semester, and year. The following are a small sampling of the assessments that were used at the Daniel Butler School during the 2015-2016 school year:

- Kathy Richardson's "Assessing Math Concepts"
- Envision Topic Test
- FUNdations (Every 6 weeks)
- Dry-erase boards, exit slips,
- Progress Monitoring for DIBELS/PASI
- Fountas & Pinnell
- Common Dictation Assessment
- Common Sight Word Assessment
- Lexia (3x / week)
- Basal end of unit assessments
- Track My Progress for ELA and Math
- Spelling (weekly)
- FASTTMath (daily)
- Common Writing Assessments through Shared Inquiry Stories (3 x a year)
- Envision Combined Topic Test (district created)

The “Walk To” instructional model (see 'Part VI: Indicators of Academic Success' below) got off the ground in Grade 1 initially, and the following year was added to Grade K. Since that time, every other elementary school in Belmont has implemented a version of the “Walk To” model that was born here at Butler. That is not to say it was an easy process; it was not. To accurately place students in reading groups requires a battery of assessments. To understand those assessments requires an increased level of skill at analyzing data and making appropriate instructional decisions. To create groups based on that data requires collaboration. And most importantly, to make those groups effective requires that high quality materials are available to every group. To make matters more complex, the process repeats itself every 6-8 weeks throughout the year; students are reassessed, progress is identified, new groups are created, and students “Walk To” new places. It is no exaggeration to say that the process has felt at times like “building the bicycle while riding it at the same time” but every session gets more organized, and every year brings new insights. We do not yet have a perfect program, but we are always making progress towards our ultimate goal: Ensuring that every student gets what they need when it comes to reading instruction.

Information on individual student achievement is shared with parents during parent/teacher conference (November and March) and through the standards-based report card that teachers complete and send home in January and June. Additionally, statewide assessment score reports are mailed home. School data on statewide assessments are shared with teachers and families through the principal’s newsletter. District and school data on statewide assessments are shared annually at school committee meetings. District and school data are also included in the Annual Town Report, available to all members of the Belmont community.

Butler is part of the Belmont Public Schools where there are high expectations for all students and teachers are dedicated to providing their students a rich and rigorous educational experience. The ESE accountability and assistance report card placed the Butler School into Level 1 because the school met its gap-narrowing goals. The Butler School was also given a percentile ranking of 91. However, low income students at the Butler School tend to perform lower in math than non-low income students on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System and do not make as much growth on the Track My Progress math assessment, which is given at the beginning and the end of the school year. Despite a math curriculum aligned to the Common Core, experienced teaching staff, and a RtI program in place, low income students at Butler do not show as much growth in math as their peers. To ensure long lasting student success, closing

this achievement gap between low income and non-low income students is critical.

During the 2013-2014 school year, there were 154 students in grades 3 and 4 at the Butler School, of which 15% were low income. Scores from the 2014 MCAS Mathematics Test and Track My Progress were analyzed with special focus paid to students' math scores. While there is growth shown with most students, the growth made by low income students is not consistent with non-low income students. On the Mathematics MCAS test, 22% of low income students scored advanced, while 48% of non-low income scored advanced. Of the low income students, 47% received needs improvement or warning/failing, but only 18% of non-low income students scored needs improvement and none received a warning/failing score. The overall growth distribution for students in grade 4 is consistent with these results as well. 30% of low income students made low growth in math in comparison to 9% low growth of non-low income students. 40% of low income students made very high growth compared to 51% of non-low income students made very high growth. Track My Progress showed slight improvement by some low income students in both grades but not to the same extent as their peers. A few low income students even scored lower on the spring than the fall Track My Progress assessments.

Our teachers at the Butler School are a committed staff. 100% of the 2014-2015 teachers were highly qualified and were all professional status teachers. The rigor of the math curriculum meets Common Core standards and class size at Butler is below average for the district (16.2 to 1 vs. 17.3 to 1). A RtI program has been in place at the Butler School for three years but is typically focused on reading skills. While more and more of math testing shows a need for strong reading skills, there are still gaps in mathematical concepts for low income students. There is a lack of sufficient Tier 2 math support for these students. Many of the students who do not show mathematical improvement struggle to keep up with their peers and the pace of the curriculum. There are often gaps seen where students did not master concepts in the earlier elementary grades, which interferes with them learning grade-level concepts and allows the gap to get wider and wider. Most of this low income population continues on into middle receiving low scores in the MCAS. Students graduate from their smaller elementary school (22:1 student-teacher) ratio where the possibility to receive extra services is a reality, to a much larger middle school (28:1 student-teacher ratio) with no service unless they qualify for special education. The amount of mathematical growth low income vs. non-low income students make only widens the gap as they progress through the grades.

At the Butler School, there needs to be just as much of an emphasis on math intervention as there is on ELA intervention in all the grades. This intervention time needs to be blocked out as sacred time and scheduled early in the year so teachers can plan their schedules accordingly. Teachers need to have the mentality that they are responsible for all the students that graduate from the Butler Elementary School. These are all goals we are working on this year because, after all, they are all our students.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

“When a student cannot read, we teach.
When a student cannot calculate or problem solve, we teach.
When a student cannot write, we teach.
When a student cannot behave, we punish.
But why don't we teach?”
- Anonymous

At the Daniel Butler Elementary School, we teach students about behavior. As a PBS school, we believe in positive behavior support. Rather than reacting to behaviors after rules have been broken, we believe in being proactive before they have a chance to break them. Therefore, we define what good behavior looks like and establish it as the target goal, and when we see it we reward it.

In the past, school-wide discipline focused solely on reacting to specific student misbehavior by implementing punishment-based strategies. Research has shown that the implementation of punishment, especially when it is used inconsistently and in the absence of other positive strategies, is ineffective. Introducing, modeling, and reinforcing positive social behavior is an important step of a student's educational experience. Teaching behavioral expectations and rewarding students for following them is a much more positive approach than waiting for misbehavior to occur before responding. The purpose of school-wide PBS is to establish a climate in which appropriate behavior is the norm.

Butler is fortunate to have a full-time School Psychologist and a part-time Guidance Counselor. These two professionals support students in several ways, including (but not limited to):

- Leading grade-level meetings and implementing our Tier 1 social competency curriculum: Second Step in Grades K, 1, and 2 and Steps to Respect in Grades 3 and 4
- Helping students, either through individual sessions or small groups, to develop the skills critical to their development and growth, such as conflict resolution, peer relationships, and self-advocacy
- Working with parents/guardians and other outside supports to foster positive school/home partnerships.
- Facilitating social groups such as “lunch bunches”
- Writing and assisting with the implementation of behavior plans with classroom teachers
- Assisting students during crisis.

We start our year by re-dedicating ourselves -- as professionals and as individuals -- to the philosophy of "the dipper and the bucket":

"Each of us owns an invisible bucket. It is constantly emptied or filled, depending on how positive we interact with people around us. When our buckets are full, we feel great. When it's empty, we feel awful. When we fill other people's buckets – by saying or doing things to increase their positive feelings – we also fill our own bucket. A full bucket gives us a positive outlook and renewed energy. Each of us also has an invisible dipper. When we use that dipper to dip from others' buckets – by saying or doing things that decrease their positive feelings – we also empty our own bucket. Sometimes our buckets are empty when we experience something unpleasant or we forget to be kind to others." As teachers we face a choice every moment of the day: We can fill one another's buckets, creating positive feelings that spread among the people we interact with during the day or we can dip from them. It's an important choice – one that affects our relationships, work, health, and happiness (adapted liberally from 'How Full Is Your Bucket' by T. Rath and D.O. Clifton).

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Belmont has a reputation as a "well-to-do" town, and deservedly so; a large majority of its population enjoys the benefits of a high SES, house prices are much higher than neighboring towns, and it is the home to two prominent private schools (The Belmont Day School and the Belmont Hill School). Despite the fact that there is a large private school tradition, the public's support for its public school is significant. One

thing that surprises most residents, though, is that its actual per pupil spending is below the state average. As such, its school offerings are typically thinner than most peer "ell-to-do" towns such as Lexington, Weston, Wellesley, etc. Even though Belmont enjoys comparing itself to these communities -- and generally ranks above them in terms of traditional academic measures (MCAS, PARCC, SAT, ACT, etc) -- it is not in the same league when it comes to school spending. We are, in fact, a victim of our own success; it is hard to convince the town to spend more on the schools when we are achieving the results that we are. One way we offset the structural deficits in our operating budget is by partnering with outside organizations. In my seven years as Principal, a few of the most lucrative private partnerships have been with:

- The Foundation for Belmont Education: "The Foundation for Belmont Education (FBE) works with residents and businesses in the Town of Belmont to raise private funds that are used to enrich the education provided by the Belmont Public Schools. The FBE has successfully granted more than \$2.6 million in support of hundreds of projects initiated and organized by administrators, teachers and staff. ...[T]he donations it raises plays a pivotal role in fostering the creativity of our teachers, engaging the interest of our students, and sustaining the tradition of excellence that has characterized the Belmont Public Schools" (from <http://fbe-belmont.org/about/>). Specific to Butler, the FBE has awarded our school over \$40,000 in teacher grants which have funded field trips (to a local Underground Railroad site, for example), technology (SMARTBoards in Grades 2-4, a laptop cart, document cameras for every classroom K-4, LCD carts, etc), and books/materials (non-fiction texts, leveled readers, classroom libraries, etc).
- The Alison Family Foundation: This private family foundation fell in love with the Butler School's demographics and has supported our programming over the last seven years to the tune of almost \$100,000. Gifts have been used to purchase playground equipment, iPads and iPad carts, Apple TV units, etc.
- The Butler PTA: When I first arrived seven years ago membership and, accordingly, engagement in the PTA was at an all-time low. I was the first new Principal in 17 years and less than a dozen parents/guardians showed up to my first ever PTA meeting. It was a sign that the parent population did not feel like they were a part of the school community. Over the years we partnered with the PTA presidents to bring more parents/guardians in. As I explained to the PTA presidents early on in those strategy sessions, "High PTA membership and strong parent involvement is a good sign for the health of a school community. When parents are a part of the school they have a better sense of what is happening within its walls; they have a better idea of what their children are learning. When they go home, they are more likely to support that learning. It is to our benefit that parents be more involved." Over those seven years we have implemented a tremendous number of new opportunities for engagement and community building, including: a "Two Hours for Butler (2H4B)" community service day, an annual Math and Science Night, and a Family Fun Run, among others. I am proud to say that last year we received an award from the National PTA Organization commending us for the highest rate of membership increase. The PTA and the Leadership of the Butler School are as closely linked as we have ever been, and they prove time and time again to be one of the most important sources of funding, encouragement, and support that our school could ever have.

3. Professional Development:

The Butler school falls within the larger district-wide professional development program. Butler teachers are supported through three primary means, including:

- Professional Development meetings (faculty, department, and curriculum meetings) which may be led by Principals, Directors, and/or Curriculum Specialists focusing on district, school, and program goals
- Professional Learning Teams, which are educators working together on a targeted area of need to improve learning for all students
- Professional Development courses, seminars, workshops, and study groups led by BPS educators, outside experts, and partner organizations.

As teachers plan their professional development for the year and identify their two goals (one Professional Practice goal and one Student Learning goal) the district attempts to provide workshops and opportunities that support teachers' ongoing learning and growth.

4. School Leadership:

In homage to the NPR segment with the same name, my school leadership philosophy is summarized by the following "This I Believe" statements:

- I believe that student learning is at the heart of our mission as educators, and it is a shared responsibility.
- I believe that as public school teachers, it is our responsibility to teach the public by empowering students with high expectations for achievement.
- I believe that schools get their business done when teachers are supported and allowed to do what they do best: teach. It is the responsibility of the administrator to act on the behalf of the teachers who are acting in the best interests of their students.
- I believe that good teaching matters. The fundamental elements of good teaching can be reduced to a few essential elements: Caring atmosphere, High expectations, Engagement of teacher and students, Clear delivery using objectives and agendas (expressed verbally or written down), Informative assessment that demonstrates that kids "got it" (formal or informal), and Effective management of behavior. These elements at the core of good teaching and should be observable during each observation.
- I believe that continual effort at improvement for all (students, teachers, and administrators) is at the heart of strong schools.
- I believe that students cannot afford to have teachers conduct cardiac assessments ('In my heart I feel like they learned it'). They deserve to have a school that is thoughtful and serious about looking at student learning, planning accordingly, and re-teaching if necessary. As Kim Marshall tells us, "It's all about shifting the conversation to results...As teachers, we can no longer afford to 'Teach, test, and hope for the best.'"

As a single administrator in a building of 45-50 professionals, a principal cannot attend to every aspect of school life independently. Therefore, we have created a multi-faceted school leadership structure, including:

1. Lead Teachers: We have Co-Lead Teachers at the Butler School; one is always a Specialist and one is always a Classroom Teacher. Each of them serves a staggered 2-year term. The position receives a stipend and its responsibilities include:

- Participating in monthly check-in meetings with the Principal.
- Communicating to their respective colleagues – teachers and specialists – any important information that results from those monthly meetings.
- Handling substitutes and morning arrival of students when the Principal is unavailable.
- Handling dismissal and afternoon dismissal of students when the Principal is unavailable.
- Being the "point person" for any incidents that occur when the Principal is out of the building.
- Serving on the Emergency Response Team whenever a major school crisis occurs.
- Serving on the School Advisory Council (2-4 meetings per year)

2. An Emergency Response Team: Our ERT consists of staff members expected to respond to any building emergency to provide immediate support and intervention. Team members are identified at the start of each school year in September and may intervene with medical support, provide a reassuring presence needed to de-escalate, and/or provide manpower to carry out small but important tasks needed to ensure a rapid and organized response. ERT members always include our School Nurse, our Guidance Counselor, our School Psychologist, our Custodian, and our School Secretary. They are led by a series of protocols and procedures.

3. A School Advisory Council: Our SAC is comprised of two teachers, two to three parents, and up to two community representatives. All members are elected for two-year terms. We meet several times throughout the year, no more than monthly, usually after the school. According to state law, Council members:

- "assist the principal in adopting educational goals for the school"
- "identify the educational needs of students attending the school"
- "review the school's annual budget"
- "assist in formulating an annual School Improvement Plan"

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The Daniel Butler Elementary School hosts a different population of students than the rest of the elementary schools in Belmont: Across the board we have the highest percentages of “needs” categories: English Language Learners, Free and Reduced Lunch, First Language Not English, Special Education, etc – sometimes to the tune of 2-5 times as many as other elementary schools in Belmont – and we generally have double the district percentages in each and every category. It is no exaggeration to say that, demographically speaking, our population is more closely compared to our neighboring towns of Waltham and Watertown than the rest of Belmont. I have sarcastically said on more than one occasion that “If we were 1,000 yards down the road, we’d be the highest achieving school in Watertown.” Despite those challenging demographics, we have managed to earn what Waltham and Watertown have not, but the rest of Belmont has: Achievement at a “Level 1” status according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Unfortunately, there are many schools with similar demographic populations who do not boast high achievement. Butler is proud to be among the schools that bucks this trend: A school of higher needs that achieves at the level of schools with lower needs, as with our fellow schools in Belmont. This year, we were proud to earn a Certificate of Achievement as a “Massachusetts Commendation School” by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. There is much evidence that things at Butler are working well. In my seven years as Principal our size has vacillated between 349 and 378 students, which places us as the smallest or next smallest school in Belmont each year. In all of those years we have made “Adequate Yearly Progress” or earned a “Level 1” distinction. If you were to ask me how we have done that I would cite a few reasons: Hard-working students, supportive families, exceptional teachers, challenging curricula, and high expectations for all are chiefly among them.

One practice that makes us so successful is our approach to reading remediation called a “Walk To” block. The concept is fairly simple: Three times a week for 30 minutes, every student in a grade level will stand up and “walk to” somewhere in the school to receive small group instruction at their exact readiness level in the area of Reading. For students who are struggling with concepts taught in class, their “Walk To” group includes re-teaching and remediation. For students who are exceeding expectations, their “Walk To” group includes enrichment activities such as writing, reader’s theater, etc. It is quite a sight to see students spreading out all over the school – in the back of classrooms, in the hallways at small-group tables, in the conference room, in computer labs, and even in the cafeteria. What could very well be chaotic – an entire grade-level crisscrossing paths and working with different adults throughout a building – is actually quite efficient. Students move promptly to their small groups and get down to business without delay. That efficiency, of course, is no accident; it is the result of a lot of deliberate planning by Reading Specialists and Classroom Teachers to ensure that every student is placed in a small group that will get provide them with exactly what they need. And, of course, what is difficult to achieve in a whole class format – close observation, proximal feedback, uninterrupted instruction, and accurate assessment – occurs for the entire “Walk To” session for each child.

Parents like “Walk To” because they know that three times each week their child is certain to get smaller group attention and instruction. Students like “Walk To” because it is an opportunity to do something different – work in a different environment, meet a new teacher, join peers in classes other than their own. Teachers like “Walk To” because it lifts a tremendous weight off their shoulders; rather than independently differentiating their instruction to meet the needs of 12 levels of readers (which is no exaggeration in an average Kindergarten classroom, who each September welcome students who can’t identify the letters in their own name to students who enter with Harry Potter tucked firmly under their arm) they are given 11 people to help them with that task. Principals like “Walk To” because it is a more logical deployment of our instruction; rather than teacher A forming a letter group for two students while teacher B forms an identical letter group to three students, in a “Walk To” model Teacher A takes all five students, freeing up teacher B to address the needs of another small group of students.

Our initial efforts focused primarily on the remedial side of reading instruction. Those students who needed intervention were the priority. As time has gone on and we have increased our strategies and purchased new materials for struggling readers, we built up a substantial reading intervention program. These successes with struggling readers have allowed us to start looking to what other students need. Because “Walk To”

includes all students, and not just lower achieving students, we have a responsibility to ensure that emergent readers also have access to appropriate strategies and materials. To that end we have started referring to the “Walk To” block as the “W.I.N.” block. In a W.I.N. block every student gets “What I Need.”