

***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 Dr. Lynne Blair

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

Official School Name Wissahickon High School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 521 Houston Road

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

City Ambler State PA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 19002-3553

County Montgomery County

Telephone (215) 619-8112 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL http://www.wsdweb.org E-mail lblair@wsdweb.org

Twitter Handle https://twitter.com/wissahick Facebook Page http://www.facebook.com/wissahickonschool  
onsd district 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\*Dr. James Crisfield E-mail jcrisfield@wsdweb.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Wissahickon School District Tel. (215) 619-8000

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 Dr. Sherri Becker  
(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	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	163	171	334
10	170	169	339
11	157	153	310
12 or higher	190	172	362
<b>Total Students</b>	680	665	1345

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 14 % Asian
  - 11 % Black or African American
  - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 65 % White
  - 5 % 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: 10%

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	76
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	57
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	133
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	1386
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.096
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

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

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

Currently: Arabic, Finnish, Korean, Tagalog, Spanish, Igbo, and Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 20 %  
Total number students who qualify: 269

8. Students receiving special education services: 17 %  
228 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.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	5
Classroom teachers	109
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	5
Paraprofessionals	22
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	8

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     21:1

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	95%	95%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	98%	98%	98%	97%	99%

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	359
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	72%
Enrolled in a community college	19%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	2%
Found employment	3%
Joined the military or other public service	1%
Other	3%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes      No

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

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

Wissahickon High School is an empowering academic community where all students are challenged to grow, learn, prosper, and realize their full personal, social, and intellectual potential, and to develop the life skills necessary to become respectful, responsible, and productive citizens of the global community.

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

---

Ranked 15th Best High School in Pennsylvania (2015 U.S. News and World Report), Wissahickon High School serves a diverse student body of approximately 1,350 students in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12. Wissahickon High School is located 22 miles north of Philadelphia in Montgomery County. The Wissahickon School District has a population of 32,260 and has approximately 4,550 students enrolled. The district encompasses Ambler Borough, Lower Gwynedd Township, Whitpain Township; the district includes an area of 25 square miles.

Wissahickon School District is a diverse social, ethnic, and economic residential community. WHS is recognized for offering rigorous courses and academic support services to prepare all students for college and career. This year, WHS received the highest School Performance Profile (SPP) score in the state of Pennsylvania - 101.8. The score reflects extra points calculated from the large number of students who earned advanced scores on the state, industry, and Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate exams and earned Wissahickon High School the recognition of being the number one high school in the state.

Wissahickon families, staff, and community have high expectations for success and work together to help students meet those expectations. All courses are designed to challenge students to achieve their greatest potential through skillful application of differentiated instruction to meet the individual needs of all learners. WHS offers 18 Advanced Placement classes and 11 Honors courses, as well as a rich selection of electives. WHS has an extensive array of special education programs and services that provide the opportunity for all students to achieve their maximum potential. A Child Study Team comprised of building administrators, guidance counselors, a school psychologist, special and general education teachers, a speech-language therapist, occupational/physical therapists, a school nurse, and the student's parent/guardian designs specific instructional strategies to meet identified students' needs, academically and/or behaviorally, at all levels.

Guidance counselors support students academically and developmentally through collaboration with other staff, parents, and outside agencies. Counselors work diligently to ensure a successful transition from our Middle School to our High School. The 9th Grade Academy Team, comprised of the teachers, counselors, and administrators, helps ensure a smooth transition to high school; the team meets weekly to discuss intervention strategies to support all students. Throughout a student's tenure at WHS, a dedicated College and Career Guidance Counselor helps students and parents navigate the college/career planning process. In addition to meeting with students individually and in small groups, the counselors deliver a developmental guidance curriculum to all students based upon standards and best practice. The counselors frequently support teachers with guidance lessons in the classroom.

WHS prides itself on fostering a safe, peaceful, and respectful environment for all students and incorporates character education into classroom and co-curricular activities. Using the theme of "Paying it Forward" this year, students organize and participate in a wide range of community service initiatives and provide generous contributions of time, talent, and financial support to various charities. To further engage students emotionally, physically, socially, and culturally, WHS sponsors more than 30 diverse co-curricular clubs and programs ranging from art, music, drama, robotics, business, law, debate and speech, and the Gay Straight Alliance. Through club meetings, events, and competitions students gain additional leadership skills and experience, meet new friends, and explore their passions. Additionally, WHS offers 30 team sports for male and female student athletes which are offered during the fall, winter, and spring seasons. Students enjoy playing their favorite sports as part of the proud Trojan community while learning teamwork, perseverance, responsibility, physical endurance, commitment, and time management.

A strong partnership with the WHS parent teacher organization further provides social and learning opportunities for students and families. Parent volunteers work closely with WHS staff and volunteer to support our dances, assemblies, and a variety of spirit related events.

WHS believes in celebrating achievements and uses a host of communication tools to share accomplishments with the school community and to provide parents with the information and resources they need to support their students. A bi-weekly Principal E-Newsletter is shared with all families and current news is posted on a weekly basis via the district website, Facebook, and Twitter pages. The WHS TV program tapes and broadcasts sporting and other school events via a cable TV channel, on demand channel, and YouTube.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

---

### 1. Core Curriculum:

The core curriculum at Wissahickon High School provides a balance of learning opportunities for all students. The curriculum for all courses undergoes an in-depth review every six years and all curriculum is written by the teachers, with support and input from district curriculum specialists. Core course programming is rigorously designed at the academic and honors level, with the fundamental concepts and skills of both tiers reflecting parallel content and skill learning expectations and student outcomes. A minimum of two Advanced Placement course opportunities are also available to students in each of the core content areas. In all content areas, differentiated learning strategies that integrate assessment and engaging and responsive teaching practices support struggling learners to be successful.

**English Language Arts:** The Language Arts curriculum is aligned to the PA Core Standards and focuses on an integrated approach to language built on a collection of literature that includes mixed genres with an array of cultural perspectives. A wealth of fiction and nonfiction texts support the development of comprehension and fluent reading strategies, higher level thinking skills, and depth of knowledge throughout all grade levels. Non-fiction study is systematically developed over 9th and 10th grades in honors and academic level classes to lay the foundation of different modes of writing. Writing workshop targets the enhancement of grammar, language study, and deepening vocabulary. Students are required to read a variety of non-fiction essays within a given mode and to write original essays focusing on specific skills. This foundation is reinforced and synthesized during the 11th and 12th grades. Students also have the opportunity to explore elective options in areas such as acting and drama, journalism, creative writing, and public speaking. Students are required to enroll in Language Arts courses all four years of high school.

**Mathematics:** The Mathematics curriculum is aligned to the PA Core Standards and integrates the Standards of Mathematical Practice for all courses offered from 9th through 12th grade. Entering the high school, almost two thirds of the students have already successfully completed Algebra 1. The mathematics curriculum is designed to develop and strategically build upon mathematical concepts, skills, applications, and reasoning through Algebra, Geometry, Algebra II, Trigonometry, and Advanced Algebra to lay the foundation for Calculus. Students learn the basic concepts through practice and problem solving, gaining immediate exposure to more advanced math concepts and skills within the context of a problem. Students work collaboratively in small groups to share and develop approaches to mathematical processes and methods for solving problems. Students have the opportunity to explore probability and statistics courses as additional offerings. Enrollment in Mathematics courses are required at least three of the four years with the vast majority of our students continuing their studies in this area during their senior year.

**Science:** Aligned to the PA Academic Standards, the Science curriculum is designed to develop scientifically literate students who understand key concepts, scientific principles, the natural world, and scientific thinking. The science program commences with the overarching concepts within Physical Science, then develops more extensively through Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. Additional curricular offerings provide students with the opportunity to explore other scientific areas including oceanography, astronomy, anatomy and physiology, sports medicine, and forensics. Fundamental and interdisciplinary skills are acquired through lab activities, with students learning through hands-on exploration and real-time application of concepts in both an independent and collaborative setting. Alignment to the PA Core Standards requires students to engage in scientific research, writing, and analysis of scientific literature. Students are given the opportunity to observe, engage and instruct each other, and experiment with ideas and hypotheses. Science courses, including a lab activity, are required at least three of the four years of high school.

**Social Studies:** The Social Studies curriculum is aligned to the PA Academic Standards for concepts within History, Geography, Economics, and Government and the PA Core Standards for the integration of Reading and Writing skills. The program is designed to prepare students to think and write analytically through a historical context while progressing through integrated aspects and themes within World History, United States History, and current issues. In addition to the historical curriculum, students can elect courses that



explore the social sciences. Students are taught the significance of formulating their own independent analytical arguments based on historical texts. Grade level conversations are established and developed as students progress through their high school studies. Essential knowledge is derived through peer conversations and reading of the text, and students utilize the information to formulate arguments and demonstrate differentiated perspectives to communicate informed opinions grounded in evidence. Information is gathered through various resources including political cartoons, primary source images, non-fiction texts, film, and fictional work that connect to history. Students are required to enroll in Social Studies courses in all four of their high school years.

To support preparation for college and career expectations, a multitude of skills are embedded within our curricular program. The one-to-one initiative develops the integration of essential technology tools such as google docs and various Microsoft applications to develop written documents, presentations, and data collection spreadsheets. Course offerings, particularly for students in the upper grade levels, allow students to elect to study areas of interest that support or ignite pursuits post high school. Access to the rigors of Advanced Placement courses are also available to all students. Within our courses, students are given opportunities to work independently and work collaboratively in small groups. Written analysis, reflection, and defense of ideas, hypothesis, and learning are incorporated into lesson goals and tasks. Students learn to manage their time and balance various school and personal obligations. The Guidance program at Wissahickon High School also supports progress through college and career exploration by monitoring students academically and developmentally. Beginning in Grade 9, students begin career interest exploration and post high school pathways through individual counseling, student and parent workshops, grade level and small group sessions, and classroom-based lessons. Guidance counselors support students through the course selection process and encourage students to build a challenging program that will extend their learning and support their future career and college-ready educational pursuits.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Wissahickon offers a robust series of elective options at all grade levels in multiple curricular areas to support the development and growth of well-rounded student interests.

**World Language:** The World Language program allows students to select the development of at least one of four languages: French, German, Japanese, or Spanish. At the high school, students are required to complete at least two years of a World Language. The program commences at the middle school, allowing students at the high school to complete four levels of language instruction plus an Advanced Placement offering by the conclusion of the senior year in whichever language strand they choose to pursue. From the beginning of their World Language experience, students are immersed in the language and challenged to communicate in that language with teacher support. Students also have the opportunity to add or transition to a second language offering during their high school experience. All World language courses provide a balance of culture, context, and language acquisition. Essential knowledge and skills are developed through procurement of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills using authentic instructional materials and enhancing language skills through grammar and vocabulary, dramatization, reading, writing and analyzing poetry, reading and analyzing pieces of literature, music, and technology applications.

**Arts:** Both the Visual Arts and Performing Arts programs include elective course offerings that span grades 9 through 12. The Visual Arts program is designed to first develop introductory skills and then progress through a sequence of more complex concepts and expression to create portfolios. Student have the opportunity to foster creativity, display viewpoint, and develop the ability to critique within the areas of drawing, painting, ceramics, sculpture, digital photography, 3-dimensional expressions, computer graphics, and web design. Essential skills and knowledge are acquired through investigation of concepts, exploration of ideas and design interpretation, practice of skills, revision of design elements and principles, and software application and integration.

The Performing Arts program offers a balance of performance-based and academic concepts and skills encompassing both choral and instrumental music opportunities. In the instrumental realm, students can elect to target band or strings offerings to continue to develop and extend music proficiency with one or more instruments. Vocal music opportunities are explored first through choral groups, with the option in

grades 11 or 12 to pursue voice lab, which is designed to enhance vocal talent within a solo performance. Students with an affinity and appreciation for aspects of music can deepen their knowledge and skills through music history and music theory course opportunities. Students in all grade levels can elect to try-out for instrumental or performing roles in the annual musical production. In all instances, students are taught and inspired to express their unique talents in the visual, fine, and performing arts.

**Health and Physical Education:** The Health and Physical Education program is founded in the development of aspects of physical, mental, and social health, nutrition, safety, and lifelong fitness. The program commences with a full year integrated Wellness program in Grade 9, which combines both health and physical education components in cardiovascular and muscular fitness, team sports, and leisure activities. Students fulfill the health requirement in Grade 11 where the program targets personal health and safety related to disease, social issues, nutrition, and CPR/First Aid, where students have the opportunity to seek certification. Physical Education opportunities are required, but not limited to, one semester in a student's sophomore and senior years. The Physical Education program is designed as a series of electives that meet the diverse interest and fitness needs of our students. Course offerings target lifetime fitness activities, team and competitive sports, rhythm and dance routines, cardiovascular and aerobic fitness, adventure education rope climbing, outdoor survival skills, and trail biking. Students have options to try skills at different levels to match their own personal wellness needs. Within the composite health and physical education program, essential knowledge and skills are acquired through fitness and nutrition tracking, real-life applications, and problem solving.

**Business:** The Business Education and Computer Science program has opportunities available to students in Grades 9 through 12 and is designed to develop business and computer related skills. Elective strands target aspects of finance and accounting, explorations in business and technology applications, retail management, marketing, international business, law, entrepreneurship, and computer programming. As part of the Business Education program, a student-run school store continues to thrive and support school pride. Overarching foundational courses serve as prerequisites in Grade 9, then allowing students to elect specific course options that pique their interest as they progress through their senior year.

**Family and Consumer Science:** The elective offerings that comprise the Family and Consumer Science program span grades 9 through 12. The curriculum provides students the opportunity to develop skills and knowledge related to the areas of family life and food preparation. Students can elect to explore areas related to nutrition, preparation techniques, baking, gourmet and international foods, and child development and parenting. As part of the child development curriculum, students work with small children in the Wissahickon Early Learning Lab.

**Technology:** The technology Education program opportunities span grades 9 through 12 offering a series of courses that allow students to explore technical and production elements. The technological aspects of the program are centered on design theory, introductory components of engineering, electricity and circuits, electronics and robotics, and computer drafting. Production elements encompass television and video editing, show production, and on-air delivery. Essential knowledge and skills are developed through an emphasis on solving a variety of challenging problems through technology integration, selection of appropriate tools and materials, and exploring various processes.

In addition to the elective program offerings provided at Wissahickon High School, students can apply to explore and pursue additional health and technical careers through part-time programs such as construction trades, engineering and manufacturing, health and human services, power and transportation, and visual communications provided by the North Montco Technical Career Center.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Wissahickon School District employs a variety of instruction and intervention models to support all learners within the K-12 system. At Wissahickon High School, students are given many opportunities to learn and think critically, developing essential skills and engaging in real world applications necessary for college and career, with supports available in and beyond the classroom.

Upon entering the high school, students are part of the team-oriented environment of the 9th Grade Academy. Grade level and content area teams work collaboratively to create a nurturing environment, monitor the progress of individual students, and provide interventions to support the success of each student.

The implementation of a one-to-one student laptop initiative at the secondary level has had a significant impact on the diversified instructional approaches and methods employed by teachers and engaging learning opportunities available to students. Technology tools accessed by teachers and students are used to facilitate engaging learning opportunities, online discussion and collaboration, virtual investigations, and access to a multitude of resources based on student need. Google documents create a collaborative space for students to share ideas and thinking. Classroom OneNote documents support individual student needs through posting of notes, supportive documents and videos, and leveled assignments on individual student pages.

Teachers integrate differentiated learning strategies that are assessment driven, responsive, and engaging for all learners. Formative assessments guide instructional planning and delivery to meet the needs of diverse learners. Differentiated instructional strategies include small group learning, tiered assignments and activities, flipped learning, use of scaffolds, student choice opportunities, and execution of various products. Examples of strategies that support high levels of learning and achievement related to the development of reading and writing skills include literature circles, Genius Hour, writing workshops, peer editing, and independent reading projects and presentations. Modeling, real-life application and problem-solving activities, small group discussion, and hands-on activities engage students in relevant math and science content learning. Second chance learning opportunities are employed across classrooms to allow students an opportunity to take part in the re-teaching of concepts and skills and re-assess their learning.

Co-teaching classrooms provide in class support to all students, particularly Special Education students. The co-teaching teams deliver instruction using a variety of strategies to work with small groups and individual students. Direct Instruction classrooms provide explicit instruction to special education students with the greatest learning needs in a small group setting. Study Skills classes offer additional contact with the Special Education teacher to provide time to support the student and to help the student develop study and organizational skills and strategies.

Integrated into the school day on two of the six days in the rotation is the Intervention and Enrichment (I/E) period. During I/E, students select teacher designed sessions that include new and expanded learning opportunities, as well as remediation to students needing additional support, including at the Honors and AP level.

For students who do not achieve a proficient score on a Keystone Exam at the end of course, they are enrolled in a content related remediation course for the following semester to receive individualized re-teaching of targeted concepts and skills.

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

Wissahickon High School administrators, teachers, and students continue to strive for excellence while supporting the various needs of all learners. A variety of assessment data is strategically analyzed in multiple tiers, including the overarching school level, grade/course level, and individual classroom level to inform student achievement and school enhancement goals. Assessment tools, such as Performance Tracker, eMetric, PVAAS, and College Board Reporting are accessed to develop reports to further analyze the achievement of targeted groups of students and within curricular concepts and skills. Achievement results from state and national assessments are reported to parents and the community annually by the district as part of a public Board presentation and through the Annual Report brochure.

At the school level, a data team, which is comprised of administrative and teacher representatives, is established to analyze, aggregate, and disaggregate results of national, state, and local assessments, including AP Exams, PSAT, SAT, Keystone Exams achievement and growth data, CDT results, and system demographic data, such as discipline and attendance data. The focus points within the data include enrollment in AP courses, participation in AP, PSAT, and SAT exams, achievement and growth of demographic subgroups, and achievement within concept areas, reporting categories, and test type items.

The analysis by the data team identifies patterns and trends related to strengths and areas of concern within the achievement of all students, subgroups of students, and the structure of school programs. The data team engages in discussions of root causes and data-informed decision-making strategies to support closing the achievement gap, development of college and career readiness skills, and enhancement of school goals; an action plan is developed to target identified areas of need while continuing to strengthen prolonged areas of success. More specifically, to target the achievement gap, the plan for the current school year focuses on remediation opportunities for students during and after the school day, staff development opportunities for our faculty on issues related to the achievement gap and equitable opportunities for all students, efforts to highlight and support differentiated teaching practices in the classroom, and the development of mentorship opportunities for affected students. Data team representatives share and collect feedback from their respective departments to communicate to and engage the entire staff in the process.

To support data analysis at the course and individual teacher level, data from multiple assessments is uploaded into Performance Tracker. Teachers and administrators run reports, evaluate the results of students through multiple lenses, and engage in collaborative conversations about practices promoting the success of all learners. In particular, Keystone Exam achievement and growth data, midterm exam, and final exam data is used to analyze the effectiveness of the curriculum, understand teacher impact on student learning, guide instruction in the Biology, Literature, and Algebra 1 Keystone related courses, as well as identify remediation needs of groups or individual students. Students enrolled in our Keystone related courses and remediation courses are administered the CDT twice during the school year – once in the fall and again in the winter. The data is used by teachers to identify areas to guide and support instructional needs of individual students, as well as groups of students. To support students in areas of need, differentiated learning experiences and remediation opportunities are employed for students at risk of not being successful.

At the classroom and individual teacher level, common unit assessments are a tool to consistently measure the achievement of students within the same course across various classrooms. To enhance the assessment for learning, teachers utilize the multitude of technological resources to create and employ a variety of pre-assessment and formative assessment tools to inform the teacher whether students are ready to move on and/or identify who needs re-teaching or clarification. Teachers gather formative data to drive instruction through needs assessments, “do now” warm-up exercises, classroom discussions, student-led symposiums, exit slips, lab reports, online forum posts, peer reviews, white boards, and using online tools such as Kahoot, Quizlet, and Nearpod.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

---

### 1. School Climate/Culture:

At Wissahickon High School, all students are encouraged to be active participants in the entire school community. Before starting at WHS, a 9th Grade Orientation program is provided to both parents and students to ensure they understand the academic expectations, as well as the extra-curricular opportunities in the high school. Recognizing that 9th grade is a pivotal year in high school, all 9th grade students are assigned to teams where they are nurtured and supported as they transition to high school. Additionally, academically strong students may choose to volunteer to participate in the STARS program which is a peer-tutoring program providing support to struggling learners. Students are also given opportunities in their schedules to get extra help from teachers. For those students not needing extra help, enrichment opportunities are provided at that time in an effort to connect students with the school and teachers. Students are encouraged to participate in extra-curriculars and to help contribute to a positive school culture.

The WHS guidance department supports the social and emotional needs of all students. Counselors push-in to classrooms teaching guidance lessons and counseling students individually throughout the student's high school career. Our Student Assistance Team identifies struggling students and provides a series of interventions including crisis counseling, drug and alcohol screenings, and mental health assessments on-site through a third party. We believe that a student's academic success is contingent upon their emotional well-being; we intentionally attend to this aspect of our students' development.

WHS is proud to actively promote character education. Students and staff embrace the 11 Principles of Character Education. Additionally, as part of this focus on character education and our "Paying it Forward" theme, students and staff are encouraged to participate in and recognize random acts of kindness. We have a number of programs in place at WHS designed to recognize strong character and our school's values.

Our Parent-Teacher Council is extremely active and plans events for students and staff to participate more fully in the high school experience; the PTC promotes a strong value of community at WHS. Teachers maintain open communication with parents and students and offer ample opportunities for students to get academic help. The Student Assistance Program and Child Study Team discuss referrals from teachers, parents, and administrators for students who need support with academic or social concerns. We also have a student/teacher mentoring program; volunteer teachers are trained and then matched with students to provide their mentee with academic and/or personal support and guidance.

When hired, new teachers participate in an induction program and new teachers are provided with a veteran teacher mentor to help support their transition into the WHS community. Through their interactions with students, teachers contribute to the positive school climate. Administration is supportive of all teachers and welcomes meetings with teachers. Teachers voluntarily participate on school committees and help set the climate and culture of the building. Bi-weekly newsletters and monthly faculty meetings are the forums for the sharing of highlights from our classrooms, as well as staff successes and celebratory events.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Wissahickon High School has had a long history of strong community connections. While the district and high school itself are of an average size, the diversity within the district makes it an exciting place to work. Families come from many different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. One ongoing major district initiative is to assist in closing the achievement gap. While this commonly refers to standardized test scores, Wissahickon High School prioritizes school improvement initiatives that allow all students to be safe and successful, both academically and emotionally.

Through the district's Communications Coordinator, the Wissahickon community is well-informed about school events and celebrations. The district utilizes social media and technology communication tools to inform the community such as email, twitter, an e-newsletter, and a newly designed website. One of the new features of the district website includes documents and announcements now translated into four different languages. Parents are able to update their email account at any time and sign up for email announcements through the WSD website as well. To encourage ongoing feedback, any member of the community, including parents and students, can submit an anonymous message through the district website's "#Say Anything" form. This form allows WHS community members to voice anonymous concerns and/or questions. Our parents also have access to an online grading portal so they can track their student's progress.

Parents and community members often serve on district committees and offer vital input into the decision-making process. Parents and community members have served on the Food Service committee, Strategic Planning Committee, Athletic Task Force, and Technology Committee, to name a few. They have also participated in the hiring of key district personnel. Through the Parent Teacher Council and the Wissahickon Educational Opportunities Foundation, parents are intimately involved in the daily life of the high school. Many varsity sports are supported by a parent Booster Club as well. At WHS, parents are highly connected and invited in during Parent Teacher Conferences, Back to School Night, and visitations during American Education Week.

One specific program that involves the community is called "Bridge to Employment" (BTE). BTE, sponsored by Janssen Biotech, which is located within the district but a subsidiary of Johnson and Johnson, involves students with college potential and exposes them to careers in the science field. Along with support from the Montgomery County Community College (MCCC), BTE provides students with hands-on learning opportunities, career exploration, job shadowing, mentoring, mock interview practice, and enrolls them in college. Another program opportunity for our students is Gateway to College. WHS students who are at risk of not graduating, due to academic and/or personal concerns, are awarded the opportunity to attend this program at Montgomery County Community College. The students enroll in courses at the college and earn credits to fulfill their high school requirements, as well as get a head start on college credits at MCCC. The program also involves counseling support and future planning guidance. Additionally, we have a program for our seniors called Social Lab. Students in this program participate in internship opportunities at local businesses and hospitals within our community for part of their school day. This hands-on opportunity fosters student growth and development. All of our seniors are also required to complete a graduation project. As part of this self-directed exploratory program, many students participate in service projects within our community.

### 3. Professional Development:

Professional Development opportunities at Wissahickon High School are thoughtfully planned and implemented. For several days prior to the first student day, new teachers attend an intensive induction program, introducing them to the instructional expectations of the district, as well as the procedures at WHS. New teachers are taught best pedagogical practices in instruction as well as all of the procedures and policies of the district. New teachers participate in the induction program for three years, are assigned a mentor teacher, and are required to attend regularly scheduled meetings and professional development opportunities to prepare them to be successful in our system. All staff attend intensive professional development throughout each school year in which best practices of teaching and learning are shared. Our staff engages in professional development sessions before the school year begins, during in-service days, and monthly during our faculty meetings.

Often, a yearly theme(s) is selected for professional development opportunities, based on the needs of the staff and the goal of overall success for all of our students. For example, currently, Wissahickon High School has embraced differentiated instruction, the achievement gap, and character education as areas of focus. Through skillful training on differentiated instruction strategies, teachers are taught how to meet the needs of individual learners. Our professional development opportunities help teachers learn how to use assessment to guide instruction. We deliberately focus on increasing the success of all of our student subgroups and brainstorm methods to meet the needs of students individually and based on racial, ability

level, and economic subgroups. Our focus on character education emphasizes a need for teachers to focus on “the whole student”. Professional relationships are cultivated with outside consultants in an effort to improve student achievement, impact staff performance, and address each of our focus areas. Consultants support our efforts to implement a train-the-trainer approach; we often rely on leaders within our staff to provide growth opportunities for their colleagues. This approach builds teacher leaders within the system and encourages ongoing collaboration. Through our professional development programs, teachers improve their teaching practices and build stronger relationships with their students, leading to improved student performance in the classroom. Data is consistently collected to ensure progress is being made in our focus areas and necessary adjustments are made in our programming accordingly.

Another extremely valuable professional development practice at Wissahickon High School is the Best Practices - Colleague to Colleague Professional Development day. Teacher leaders are encouraged to present their best practices in their classrooms to their colleagues in sessions throughout an in-service day. All teachers select sessions of interest and learn directly from their colleagues (both teachers and administrators). Again, this practice encourages developed leadership within the staff. Teachers are empowered to be leaders because we believe that the capacity to do great things lies within the teachers themselves. Needs of students and staff are identified and teachers are then taught to be experts in these areas and these teacher leaders work with and support their colleagues in these areas of need. Administrators also work collaboratively with these teacher leaders and support all staff in the implementation of best teaching practices and techniques.

#### 4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy of Wissahickon High School seeks to build on the diversity of its community members. One major tenet of the Wissahickon philosophy is that all stakeholders are expected to collaborate. Similar to all schools, we have the requisite administration meetings (one principal, three assistant principals, one athletic director, and one building and grounds supervisor), guidance meetings, department chair meetings, and other such committee meetings. At WHS, these meetings all follow the same general principles – frank, open discussion about the culture and climate of WHS and what can be done to improve the achievement of all students. We all play a part in bettering the school experience of all of our students.

Teachers are asked and encouraged to be collaborators concerning student success. WHS has two teams that track student progress, both in the academic and social-emotional realms. These teams (Case Management/Child Study and Student Assistance Program) both consist of teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, the school nurse, and the school resource officer. Team members are expected to communicate with teachers, collect data, and lead the discussion about problem solving strategies that will help all students. Intervention strategies are determined and each case is closely monitored to ensure positive changes.

Department Chairs are lead teachers within each curricular area. They also practice distributive leadership. They are expected to communicate to and build consensus within their departments concerning a positive school climate and student achievement. They are tasked to be instructional leaders and are provided with resources to share and model for their colleagues. They are key communicators in our efforts to minimize our achievement gap and practice effective differentiated instruction. They are also active in curriculum review and have wide discretion over budgetary matters. More recently, they have been in close collaboration with the colleagues at Wissahickon Middle School to discuss issues such as tracking, placement testing, curricula, and best instructional practices.

Wissahickon High School students are also expected and encouraged to practice their leadership skills at the school. There are countless opportunities for students to serve as leaders and our students are instrumental in building the positive school climate we have at WHS. Many student leaders meet with the school administration on a regular basis during our Enrichment Period. We have over thirty co-curricular student clubs where leaders make their impact. Two groups that I think provide a glimpse into the opportunities students have at WHS are our FANS club and our DVCEE student cohort. Years ago, several students banded together to form a “FANS” club at the school. In time, this has now become one of our

biggest clubs at WHS and its sole purpose is to raise school spirit. FANS students can be spotted at football games, field hockey games, and other student events such as concerts or a robotics competition; they provide their support to their peers at competitions and performances. Wissahickon School District has made one of its goals to reduce the achievement gap across the district. To assist in this, WHS has sent a group of students to conferences supported by the Delaware Valley Consortium for Excellence and Equity (DVCEE). At these events, students collaborate with other schools in the region to come up with solutions for attacking the achievement gap at their schools and learn insights into themselves and their leadership potential.



## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

---

Wissahickon High School staff are dedicated to effective teaching practices and the implementation of differentiated instruction. As mentioned, differentiated instruction is one target area of our professional development opportunities this year. We believe that instruction should consistently be student-centered considering the readiness levels of each individual student, the students' interests, and the students' learning styles. We promote that our instruction should target the needs of all learners, our assessments should be engaging, informative, and grounded in choice, and we should maintain and be driven by high expectations for all of our students.

Differentiated instruction at Wissahickon High School is responsive to student needs, intentionally designed, and data-driven. Best practice at WHS models that assessment should consistently guide instruction. Our professional development opportunities during our in-service workshops and during our monthly faculty and department chair meetings are directed to enhancing the repertoire of strategies that teachers use to target the learning needs of all of our students; our teachers are encouraged to believe that all students can learn, to be open to learning new strategies to develop as a teacher, and to invite feedback from colleagues about best practices. Our staff is committed to delivering assessment-driven instruction that is responsive to student needs, focused on important learning goals, and engaging at the appropriate level of rigor; the instruction is deliberately differentiated to meet the learning needs of every individual student.

Our teachers are dedicated to differentiating the content and curriculum, their process and instruction, the students' product and assessments, and the learning environment through a wide array of techniques. Our efforts are focused on having teachers use the assessment to guide the instruction, rather than the instruction preceding the assessments. The administrative team, at both the district and building level, is committed to supporting our teachers on their growth to help ensure that our students are succeeding in their learning. We rely on teacher leaders to model our best practices and expectations and diligently work to prioritize opportunities for teacher leaders to showcase their successful practices. The focus of administrator walk-through visits into classrooms and post-observation conferencing with administrators and teachers is to provide teachers with feedback on their effective instructional techniques and to help our staff grow and excel in their profession.