

U.S. Department of Education
2017 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. William Daniel Santarsiero

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

Official School Name Morris Street Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 28 Morris Street

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

City Danbury State CT Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 06810-5473

County Fairfield County

Telephone (203) 797-4809 Fax (203) 830-6514

Web site/URL

<https://sites.google.com/a/danbury.k12.ct.us/morris-street-elementary/> E-mail santaw@danbury.k12.ct.us

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Salvatore Pascarella E-mail pascas@danbury.k12.ct.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Danbury School District Tel. (203) 797-4701

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Ralph Pietrafesa
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date _____

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

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, 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. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
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 2011 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: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.
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 has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2016-2017) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 13 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 3 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 17 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, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	35	30	65
1	28	27	55
2	25	33	58
3	23	36	59
4	49	33	82
5	24	28	52
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	184	187	371

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 5 % Asian
 - 7 % Black or African American
 - 71 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 14 % White
 - 3 % 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 2015 – 2016 school year: 20%

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, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	31
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	39
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	70
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	355
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.197
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	20

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 50 %
186 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Portuguese, Khmer, Urdu, Pashto, English, Arabic

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 89 %
Total number students who qualify: 334
8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %
37 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.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <u>1</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>4</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>17</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>11</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</u> Mental Retardation | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 20
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 including those teaching high school specialty subjects	19
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	14
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	15
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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 19:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	99%	97%	99%	97%	0%
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 2016.

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
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.

Morris Street School is a community of learners committed to educating the whole child, striving for excellence and improving student achievement every day.

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

Morris Street Elementary School is one of thirteen elementary schools in Danbury, Connecticut. Danbury is a very diverse community and this diversity is reflected in our school and the inner city neighborhood in which we are located. Morris Street is a Title 1 school with almost 90% of our students qualifying for free and reduced lunch and considered economically disadvantaged. Additionally, over 50% of the student population comprises families that speak English as a second language or not at all.

Morris Street is considered to be an “inner city” school. We are located in a neighborhood composed mostly of multiple family dwellings. It is not unusual for more than one family to occupy one apartment. We are also a “neighborhood” school having only a handful of students riding one bus.

In 2003, Morris Street School was the first school in Danbury to be identified as a school “in need of improvement” under the NCLB Act for both Literacy and the subgroup Economically Disadvantaged. When identified as needing improvement, our staff embarked upon an aggressive school improvement plan. Since that date, student achievement at Morris Street School has steadily increased. Our school improvement plan is an evolutionary work which is still in use today with teachers consistently reflecting on and improving their practice.

We met as a school-wide team and decided to identify action items and strategies which would improve student achievement. We did this through the use of surveys and the results of the surveys were surprising. Some of the results of the survey findings identified areas in need of focus: Student Achievement, Parent Involvement and the general Culture of our school. As we worked, we realized how important the school’s culture was and that would have to be where we began our work; nothing would dramatically change unless we first addressed our adult behaviors. We decided to adopt norms of behavior: Things we will always do/ Things we will never do. We quickly realized the power of professional respect.

Having established normative behaviors and respect, we quickly noticed the tone of the school was beginning to improve. Teachers were no longer afraid to take professional risks and thinking out of the box and collaborating became the norm. As we grew so did our trust of each other.

Student Achievement and Parent Involvement were two other areas identified as needing our focus. As a staff we agreed everyone would be on a committee. Out of these committees came the idea of implementing a Distributive Leadership Model. All teachers have open venues in which to be heard and all ideas and suggestions are considered seriously by all. Teachers decide and vote upon action items at the committee level then bring them to the next faculty meeting (conducted with a modified Robert’s Rules of Order). The faculty votes on all items and agree to support both publicly and privately the outcomes. Morris Street continues to operate in this manner.

In 2007, all Fairfield County schools were reviewed by Cambridge University in conjunction with the Lone Pine Foundation located in Greenwich, CT. We were nominated for and won third place after two magnet schools; one located in Stamford and the other in Greenwich. In 2008 we were identified as the number one school in Fairfield County for having sustained seven consecutive years of growth in all areas including academics.

For the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years, Morris Street has been the highest functioning school in Danbury. This year, Morris Street has been rated and praised as a “School of Distinction” Tier 1 for whole group growth as well as the subgroups of Special Education, ELL and Economically Disadvantaged. We are in the top 10% of high performing schools in Connecticut. We have no Achievement Gap. We have implemented many strategies at Morris Street to help us meet the academic, emotional, physical, social and emotional, and cultural needs of our students.

We have day long grade level meetings, every six weeks allowing all grades to participate on a rotational basis. During our grade level meetings, CST/Scientific Research Based Instruction and data Team Meetings are convened in the principal’s office with Special Area teachers in attendance. All goals and objectives are

written in “SMART” format and set for review in six weeks.

We have piloted and refined our Interventionist Program. We have six highly qualified Interventionists who work collaboratively with all classroom teachers and who provide services to small homogeneously grouped students in Literacy and Math for Tiers 2 and 3 of the SRBI process.

We ensure all work is done with great fidelity and precision and is monitored routinely on a scheduled basis.

Our Family Resource Center (FRC), housed in Morris Street School, works collaboratively with the school to strengthen the ties between the school and the families by providing programs, family support, and access to a variety of resources. There are seven required components of the FRC program. In addition to those seven, additional activities and programs are offered to students and families.

Home Visitations provide “The Parents as Teachers” (PAT) program to aid parents in helping their children. The Family Resource Center conducts home visits with families that will be attending Morris Street School. Parents learn about their child’s development, brain development and are able to do early screenings. They use the curriculum and model it with great fidelity.

There is a Birth to 5 Play and Learn Playgroup. The Play & Learn Playgroup is offered once a week for 48 weeks through the FRC. This provides opportunities to foster group connections and parents and children to socialize. Children are exposed to literacy, learn activities, listen to music and work on crafts. Two Field trips are offered yearly.

Community Cafés are offered to provide Adult Education on various topics such as Positive Discipline, Health and Nutrition, Social Media Safety and Awareness, and Summer Recreational Programs. Parents come to learn and ask questions in a safe environment.

The Extended Learning Program (ELP) provides before and after school enrichment at Morris Street School. The program operates from 7:00 to the beginning of the school day. It resumes at 3:00 and ends at 6:00 each evening. The program follows the Danbury Public Schools Calendar.

The Positive Youth Development Program is offered to students in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades. This includes the Creative Corner, a monthly program that offers enrichment activities to 4th grade students.

The Lunch Bunch is a weekly lunch meeting with 5th grade students for 5 weeks consecutively. The purpose of the lunch is to have conversations with students with varied pertinent topics.

There is an after school program which focuses upon social skills, positive relationships and implements community projects.

Our Get Fit Club is our 10 week sports club for 3rd and 4th grades. This enables us to keep our students active and healthy without parents feeling the pressures of enrolling their children in organized sports.

School Readiness is offered to 3 and 4 year olds and is operated at a different location. Two classrooms include all eligible Morris Street School students. This program helps children prepare for kindergarten and follows a strict curriculum. It is state licensed and NAEYC accredited.

Our Parent and Adult Education program is offered every year to every parent at Morris Street School. Workshops such as Adult Literacy to learn English (10 week sessions), Alcohol & Substance Abuse Prevention Workshops, and Workshops to learn about the school, district, and community agencies and the services they offer to the families.

In addition to the above, five years ago Morris Street School piloted a volunteer program initially staffed by members of the principal’s church. The members volunteered two hours a week and worked consistently with the same teacher and students all year long. This program was extremely effective and the children grew emotionally and academically. They loved their volunteers. Because of the success of this program, we have coordinated with all other church denominations through the assistance of Danbury’s Area

Religious Communities (ARC) and have now expanded the program to include four additional Title One schools in Danbury.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Morris Street School follows the Danbury Public Schools' curriculum, reflecting the Connecticut Core Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

Students at Morris Street School are engaged in a balanced literacy approach to instruction from kindergarten through fifth grade. The teachers' commitment to developing literate students is of utmost priority as children are immersed in literacy for over two hours each day. Utilizing units of study from the Teachers' College Readers and Writers Project, teachers design lessons implementing a gradual release of responsibility with the goal of ultimately leading students to apply literacy skills and strategies independently. During instruction, teachers model multiple reading and writing strategies and coach their children through their independent application to build the transference of knowledge.

In addition, teachers plan authentic tasks to engage their students. For example, while learning how to write persuasive pieces, kindergartners wrote letters in an attempt to improve their personal community. This authentic task provided students an actual audience for their writing, allowing them to write with purpose and voice. During an integrated science unit, 5th grade students wrote creative nonfiction pieces about life, earth, or physical science topics that were bound and published with the help of a freelance editor. This project exemplified the rigorous learning experiences teachers expose their children to: research, synthesizing information, and applying knowledge by integrating factual information into creative pieces.

Teachers at Morris Street School also understand the importance of building students' foundational skills so that they are able to read and write fluently. Phonics and word study lessons are differentiated to ensure each student receives instruction precisely designed for his/her needs. Teachers utilize assessments to monitor progress and adjust instruction on a consistent basis, often grouping children among classes grade-wide; this approach exemplifies the philosophy of teachers at Morris Street School that all teachers are dedicated to the success of all students.

In the 2015-2016 school year, the K-5 math program is based upon the eight mathematical practices incorporated into a problem solving approach. In 2016-2017, the district implemented Investigations math program in grade K-3. Teachers receive professional development in areas of content and curriculum alignment. The school has a part-time math coach who works with the teachers to ensure pacing and refining their craft. The problem solving approach is taught through the use of reflective reading, 3-Act Math and making sense of a problem. This enables children to understand what it is they are doing mathematically so that they can apply an appropriate strategy.

In 4th & 5th grade, the teachers deliver a home-grown program that is aligned to the Math Practice standards and the Common Core standards that is rooted in problem solving, incorporating 3-Act math., discovery, and varied approaches.

Science and Social Studies:

Teachers approach science instruction through an inquiry based learning model which they embed within their literacy instruction. For example, teachers introduce concepts to students with hands on experiments and then cement their understandings by reading multiple texts on the topic and writing about their learning. They follow the scientific method, at times, utilizing lab reports to integrate writing to learn. For example, in second grade, students study the concept of forces and motion. Students conduct experiments, first as a whole class to test the distance a car may travel off of a ramp, and then they imagine different scenarios that may impact the distance the car may travel, choosing and creating a new hypothesis to test in partnerships. Through this experiential learning and integration of literacy and choice, students gain a deeper understanding of concepts. Currently, teachers are starting to deliver the Next Generation Science standards to the best of their ability, as the district works to defines new curriculum and purchase resources.

Social studies instruction is truly embedded within literacy instruction, as students explore multiple

informational texts such as biographies and historical fiction. As with science, students write to learn and share their knowledge. Additionally, teachers work to integrate civic learning experiences into the curriculum, learning about local, state, and national government. They intentionally plan multiple field trips per year to expose children to their neighborhood and community helpers, as well as important historical sites and museums in an effort to provide additional hands on learning experiences.

Additionally, fifth grade teachers are involved in Immigration Nation, a program that focuses on the significant contributions of immigrant groups to American culture. Students study immigration through literature, writing, and the arts and then take multiple field trips to connect learnings to real world artifacts. This study is especially important as it connects personally to many of the children's lives.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Every class at Morris Street from K - 5th takes part in Visual Arts and General Music instruction once each week for 40 minutes following National Core Arts Standards and district-aligned curriculum, written and taught by certified district Arts teachers. In addition, an after-school Art enrichment program is offered in rotational 6 week sessions for grades 3 - 5. We have a long-standing collaboration with the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art that integrates LA /writing with 4th and 5th grades.

Sixty-eight students are also able to elect instruction in Strings or Band instruments in grades 3 - 5, and take lessons once per week, culminating in a yearly concert.

Our music teacher also collaborates with one of our community volunteers to run a Ukulele Club - Twelve 5th graders meet once a week after school to learn and play folk and pop music.

Students are exposed to a variety of physical fitness based activities/games that enhance their strength, endurance, and flexibility levels while also learning about the importance of teamwork and sportsmanship. Other valuable programs that students are exposed to include the annual Jump Rope for Heart program, which helps raise money for the American Heart Association while teaching students jump roping skills, valuable heart health lessons. Students and parents also participate in a peer leadership Family Fun and Fitness assembly/night, consisting of activities involving healthy food choices, portion control, and fitness games with the family. The staff volleyball game is a morale builder for everyone with the staff displaying their physical skills, teamwork, and sportsmanship in action. Our school nurse won recognition as one of Connecticut's Top 10 Nurses. As many of our families don't have health insurance, our nurse often acts as the first line of medical attention for our families. Many of our students have asthma, so our nurse spends a lot of time teaching students and parents how to manage their disease. She confers with parents who request health reviews of their children to determine if they need further care by a doctor or at the ER.

We are a part of the Friday Food Backpack program through CT Food Bank for children at risk. Our school also supplies daily free healthy snacks to our students through a grant from our Food Service, Sodexo. Our school has also secured a grant which provides backpacks and school supplies to any student in need at the start of the year. Additionally, Union Savings Bank has chosen Morris Street School to participate in their newly piloted free "Supplies for Teachers and Students" program.

The Lions Club provides vision screening to all of our students and Every Smile Counts provides K-3 students with dental screenings.

Currently, Morris Street School has six portable computer carts, consisting of 45 MacBooks Air, OS X laptops, 23 MacBook Pro, OS X laptops, 25 Chromebooks, 24 Chrome Yoga Think Pads and 30 iPads.

Our nineteen classrooms are assigned a computer lab for a forty-minute block each week. Teachers can sign out extra computer labs during the week. The computer labs are also available to special area teachers, Special Education teachers, ESL and Bilingual teachers, paraprofessionals and reading interventionists.

The teachers are the instructors during the computer labs. The programs they use enhance and facilitate

classroom instruction and vary from grade to grade. Teachers are cognizant of the Common Core Standards when developing computer lessons. Many of our grades use Google Classroom to present lessons and have students respond on their teacher's Google Classroom. Assessments are done and sent back to students electronically.

Our ELL population uses a program called Imagine Learning which targets and supports English Language learners and struggling readers in their primary and second language.

Sumdog, a math program is used by all grades to support and enhance our math program. Students compete with other students through the Western Connecticut Math Contest.

All our students use Raz Kids. This program allows students to find and read books on their reading and interest level. It is a personalized library of leveled books. All online activities can be tracked and teachers can be provided with data to help future instruction.

Our school district and media department has provided apps and websites on school webpages to be used by students and teachers during computer labs. Each core curriculum area has suggested webpages for use by teachers and students.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Classroom teachers and school specialists work in constant collaboration to ensure instruction is meeting students' needs. Because teachers place such importance on having this collaborative time, they worked with the principal to create a schedule that allows time for collaborative planning on a consistent basis; teachers have created built in time to plan as a grade level and additional time to collaborate with specialists. Due to the high number of English language learners, this time is especially important for classroom teachers to communicate with ELL teachers. During these collaborative sessions, teachers plan instruction, evaluate their students' progress and make adjustments to instruction that includes pacing, student groupings, and instructional strategies.

Due to the diverse needs of the children at Morris Street School, teachers utilize various strategies to differentiate instruction for their learners. Teachers can regularly be seen modeling and thinking aloud the use of various literacy and numeracy strategies, creating strategy charts with students and placing them in prominent places in the room for reference, incorporating visual models, and providing one on one coaching for students during independent work time to support students' independent application of strategies. As previously mentioned in the curriculum section, teachers often differentiate even across their grade level in order to provide instruction tailored to all student's needs. As instructional cycles progress, teachers regularly examine student class work and assessment data results to make timely adjustments.

In order to ensure students are always receiving appropriate instruction, Danbury Public Schools utilizes multiple assessments to obtain screening and diagnostic information about our children. To begin, the STAR reading and math assessments are administered three times a year (September, January, and April) to provide baseline information about students' reading comprehension, vocabulary, and numeracy skills. These test results provide baseline and norm referenced progress monitoring data which teachers can access to determine students who are in need of urgent intervention, intervention, on watch or who are at/above benchmark. From this initial data, teachers may administer additional assessments to gather diagnostic information about a student. Teachers may administer the DRA, Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark, or Qualitative Reading Inventory to get information about their students' reading behaviors. If initial student data indicates a need for more information about a child's foundational skills, teachers may administer assessments such as the Phonological Awareness Screener or the CORE Phonics Assessment. The district has also created math assessments that can be used to gather information about students' gaps and monitor their progress toward grade level assessments. Results from these additional tests help teachers design appropriate interventions for students.

Six highly qualified Interventionists are utilized to provide additional academic support based upon data results, and teacher professional opinions. They provide support for small groups (up to seven students) in

Literacy and Math. Most students serviced are identified as either Tier 2 or Tier 3 of the CST/SRBI process. They assess students either weekly or bi-weekly, enter their data in Google Sheets and report to teachers who report the data out during CST/SRBI meetings. Many times, they attend these meetings.

In addition, staff meet in weekly Data Team and SRBI (Scientifically Research Based Intervention) meetings on a rotational basis to analyze data to meet students' learning needs. These teams are comprised of classroom, resource, and ELL teachers as well as math and literacy coaches, school social worker and psychologist, and the school principal. During these meetings, grade level and individual student goals and objectives are created in a collaborative process. The classroom teacher then works with an interventionist or other support person to meet students' defined goals and objectives. These ongoing monthly meetings provide opportunities for the collaborative team to re-evaluate students' progress and make adjustments to instruction, including adding more supportive interventions, if necessary.

The school does not have a defined achievement gap of more than 10% but utilizes the Data Wise process to determine a problem of practice in grade level teams.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Morris Street School's staff and students are committed to a school climate/culture of excellence. Our Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) program utilizes an incentive program entitled Roaring Lions which acknowledges students who are respectful, responsible, safe and caring. Teachers in the lower grades utilize a "clip-up" system to ensure that students are ready for learning and that behavior is positive. There is a culture of kindness throughout our school. This has been reinforced with a campaign entitled "Start with Hello", which focuses on the inclusion of others. The walls are covered with positive messages of kindness written by students. Bullying is not tolerated and students know that they can talk to any staff member about such concerns.

The school has monthly school wide assemblies where individual students in each class are awarded either the Kid of Character or the Student of the Month. These students then have lunch with the principal that day. There is a school wide monthly attendance contest between classes which adds to each student's sense of responsibility. We celebrate first, second, and third place. The first place class wins a stuffed lion that remains in their class for the month. There is a bulletin board in the main hallway that displays the results. Graphs and photographs of the winning classes and principal are prominently shown.

There is also a Roaring Lions school wide incentive which addresses "on the spot" recognition for positive student interactions with staff and peers. All staff members carry 4" x 3" slips of paper and when they see a student doing something positive, they write what they saw on the slip, give it to the student and the students with the most slips have lunch with the principal on Fridays.

The social worker and psychologist connect with students and families by providing classroom social skills lessons and teaching the Zones of Regulation. They also provide many lunch bunch group opportunities to reinforce and teach social skills in a smaller setting.

The school also has a school improvement team that meets to address school needs. For example, this year our school focused on improving attendance and each class works towards the best attendance possible. The attendance team meets at least three times per month and focuses on improving school wide attendance. Data is maintained and there are incentives for students who improve from the previous year. Letters are mailed to parents and meetings scheduled when absences appear to be problematic. Morris Street continues to have the best attendance rate of all Danbury Public Schools.

Teachers are highly motivated, feel valued and supported as is evidenced by their desire to help one another and the school in whatever way possible. Some recent examples are stepping in when an injured staff member cannot perform her duties, coming to the playground on hot summer days and painting murals on the drab playground walls, and volunteering to supervise students from another classroom who are unable to attend a field trip.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Morris Street also has a very effective, newly reorganized PTO which does much to support our school. They help with our school's mission through classroom activities, after school events, evening and weekend activities.

There is a great deal of communication between parents and teachers. In addition, there is an open door policy for the principal, social worker, and psychologist if parents have concerns. Parents are connected to community resources by support staff and utilize community counseling agencies, food banks, heating assistance, help for homeless, and many other services. We also have an on site Family Resource Center (FRC) with Spanish and Portuguese speaking employees who can assist bilingual families to access needed supports. In addition to the many connections to community resources, Morris Street School offers numerous after school and evening programs such as English classes for Spanish and Portuguese speaking parents, Get Fit Club, reading events, Math game night, and much more.

To further support student growth many of our students have mentors from the business community through the Danbury Schools and Business Collaborative (DSABC). The mentors visit once weekly during lunch and recess times to foster a positive relationship and provide an adult role model. In addition, we have an extensive group of retired volunteers who assist students with reading and other academics on a very regular basis.

Morris Street enjoys collaboration between all special area teachers, support staff and classroom teachers. As mentioned previously, the Attendance Team works diligently with teachers and parents in helping our students get to school on time, have no unexcused absences, not leave early and not take vacations when school is in session. Math and Literacy coaches assist teachers with the new curriculum recently implemented as well as struggling students. Our school social worker and psychologist have programs and initiatives addressing student social, emotional, and cultural needs. Both the social worker and psychologist assist with our monthly Awards Assemblies where students are recognized for academic achievement (Student of the Month) and for positive behavior (Kid of Character).

All Morris Street staff take ownership of what makes Morris Street School a very special place. No job is beneath anyone and everyone helps. The tone and tenor of the building is palpable. Upon entering Morris Street School, one immediately has a “feel” for the welcoming environment, order, a sense of safety while noticing great work being done.

3. Professional Development:

Morris Street School participates in year long, district level professional development. Two times per month, there is a one-hour early release to enable teachers to receive a two and a half hour professional development session. Grade level teams meet during this time with either a district math or language arts specialist to receive content specific training. Teachers are given time within these meetings to share celebrations, strategies, concerns, questions, and data as related to coaching experiences. New strategies and ideas supporting staff in implementing the Common Core standards are shared. Instructional coaches also share new research that has been done on a national level with teachers.

In addition to district planned professional development, teachers meet in grade level teams on a weekly basis to plan daily lessons and on a monthly basis to complete long-range planning. This collaboration allows teachers to reflect and discuss their practice and instructional strategies. When possible, these meetings are facilitated by instructional coaches who encourage teachers to think about not just the lessons that they are teaching but how those lessons relate to the common core standards.

Specifically, in language arts, recent professional development has been focused on using assessment information to plan instruction. Teachers have analyzed running records alongside developmental continuums of student reading development to design lessons that will support and expand students repertoire of reading strategies. These ongoing sessions have provided continuous support for teachers as they progress with the students through the year and maintain the focus of building students’ independent application of strategies and skills.

In math, professional development is focused on looking at lessons through the lens of what is the math and what are the standards that this lesson meets. Teachers are given instructional scales to help them to determine what are the challenges that some students might encounter as barriers to success. In addition teachers are encouraged to utilize resources such as Achieve the Core to further understand how the standards are connected.

The district has also implemented new programs in language arts and mathematics in the 2016-2017 school year. Professional development in grade levels with those new programs meet more frequently to discuss implementation and tools needed to be successful.

Finally, embedded professional development is provided through in-classroom coaching. The language arts and math specialists provide support to teachers that is individualized to their personally identified

goals through modeled lessons, co-teaching, and collaborative planning. This type of professional development allows teachers to have the ongoing support as they implement instructional strategies.

4. School Leadership:

The principal and staff work within a democratic school leadership model. Courses of action are determined with teacher input. A process is in place for teachers to put forth ideas, have them voted upon by colleagues, and implemented if approved by staff majority.

Teachers are also given leadership roles on a voluntary and sometimes rotational basis. Although the principal attends all data team and CST/SRBI meetings, he attends as a member. Each grade level has a designated leadership member who chairs these meetings. A teacher leader is responsible for assembling agenda items and chairing staff meetings, and another is responsible for taking and sharing the minutes generated with the entire staff.

Operating with a distributive leadership model for many years, the principal has observed outstanding growth in the tone and culture of the entire building. Most outstanding has been the growth students have made. The distributive leadership model has had a dramatic effect upon the general happiness and satisfaction of the teachers. No teachers transfer out of Morris Street School and there are many who wish to transfer in. Results of staff, parent, and student surveys are remarkable. All three surveys rank Morris Street School above 95% on all items as “agree” or “strongly agree.”

Additionally, the principal believes in being the “teacher” he wants his teachers to be. He is a model by virtue of what he does. He arrives very early every day and leaves well after the close of the day. He presents himself in a well-dressed, positive manner and believes no job is beneath anyone. He serves food in the kitchen, mops floors, shovels snow, picks up litter, takes over classes when a teacher is ill, answers the phone, and appreciates all that teachers have to do. He recognizes when teachers are beginning to feel overwhelmed and to the best of his ability tries to negate this. All teachers have his home contact information, and he encourages them to use it. He wants no one to worry over night nor over the weekend. The principal has faith in the teachers’ abilities; he supports them to feel comfortable taking risks, and trusts that teachers are doing the right thing. The principal makes sure the teachers feel valued.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Teachers at Morris Street School take their role as the educators of the three hundred seventy one children at this school very seriously. They firmly believe that the work they do with the children now needs to set them up for success in life. They take a relentless approach to ensuring all students are provided with the instruction they need to reach their greatest potential. Building from this foundational value, the teachers' Child Study Meetings have been one of the cornerstones of the success Morris Street School has achieved. Teachers consistently ask, what can we do here at Morris Street School to help each child? They understand that every child may not have a family member accessible to provide at home enrichment or additional practice, so with that recognition, teachers find ways to provide differentiated instruction in and outside of their classrooms.

The teachers adhere to a very specific procedure during their child study. They set specific goals that are designed based on students' prioritized needs, choose instructional strategies and materials that are research based, and monitor the student's ongoing progress. When students are making progress, teachers evaluate the necessary next steps: can interventions be scaled back or should they stay the course continuing the support? If students are not making progress, teachers reevaluate the strategies and instructional materials and provide added instructional time, as needed. Simply put, every child receives the intervention he/she needs. Teachers take very seriously their responsibility that when children leave Morris Street Elementary School they are poised for success to become productive members of their community and it is evident in the manner in which they design instruction for all learners.