

U.S. Department of Education
2017 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. Fran Schlenoff

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

Official School Name Briarcliff Middle School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 93 Briarcliff Road

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

City Mountain Lakes State NJ Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 07046-0000

County Morris County

Telephone (973) 334-0342 Fax _____

Web site/URL http://www.mlschools.org/ E-mail fschlenoff@mlschools.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Anne Mucci E-mail amucci@mlschools.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Mountain Lakes Public School District Tel. (973) 334-8280

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 Mrs. Elena Goldthwaite
(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 1 K-12 schools
- 4 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	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	56	50	106
7	53	49	102
8	52	59	111
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	161	158	319

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 14 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 7 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 74 % 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: 3%

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	2
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	7
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	9
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	316
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.028
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 4 %
Total number students who qualify: 12
8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %
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.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
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	18
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	15
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 18:1
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	96%	96%	96%	96%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Honoring the worth of each student, Ensuring every student is known, Supporting academic, social and emotional growth, Inspiring and developing positive citizens and lifelong learners.

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

Mountain Lakes Borough, located in Morris County, New Jersey, has a population of approximately 4,275. In 1910 it was rural woodland owned by a few families, within ten years, it became a planned community of homes, and the people who lived here became known as "Lakers." 107 years later this identity and character are reflected by Briarcliff Middle School's never ending determination to grow and excel. The Briarcliff Middle School community is made up of 330 students in grades 6-8. Students from all over New Jersey participate in Lake Drive, our program for Hearing Impaired students. As a result of this partnership, all of our students are introduced to Sign Language, and the Lake Drive students are fully integrated into our educational program.

Briarcliff enjoys many traditions. Our students meet with our elementary school students to read to them annually. Our drama club, musicians, and vocalists perform at various community events throughout the year. On Halloween, the entire middle school visits the elementary school to cheer them on as they proudly parade around the school track. Under the leadership of our student government association, our students collect and donate food and toys to local charities. School spirit intensifies through our yearly Faculty vs. Student Basketball game and Briarcliff Pride Days, where we celebrate the many contributions our staff and students make to the greater community. This year we honored a student who turned his diabetes diagnosis into a teaching experience for others when he created posters of himself playing soccer with a pump and announced that he knew what he was doing with his Halloween candy...he was donating it to the troops. Through his initiative, the school collected 150 pounds of candy and 133 letters to send to our troops.

Briarcliff Middle School is not just a middle school in name; it embraces the values and beliefs imperative in providing young adolescents with academic, social and emotional supports. Students are encouraged to improve their organizational skills, discover personal strengths, develop coping skills, cultivate a passion for learning, and, most importantly, build a positive self-image.

At Briarcliff, the focus is the education of the "whole child." At Briarcliff, learners' needs are met through differentiation of instruction and the integration of technology in the classroom, as well as supplementary classes created to provide support for struggling students. Also, faculty members infuse technological applications into daily lessons to engage the 21st-century student. Students create curriculum-based projects using the most updated software applications, and faculty members utilize technological innovations to provide relevance, draw connections, and allow for higher-level thinking development. When students encounter difficulty, need additional support and encouragement, there are several opportunities available to them.

To this end, Briarcliff Middle School is always looking for ways to grow and improve. In 2016, Briarcliff Middle School applied and was accepted to participate in the "Connected Roadmap" (CAR) pilot program offered by the NJDOE and the NJPSA. The principal and eight teachers participated in this program. They attended several workshops and met once a week in school to learn and discuss how CAR could promote and sustain worthwhile teacher Professional Learning Community's (PLC's) that would continuously focus on student achievement. The PLC gave the committee time for focusing on connecting the standards, student assessments, professional learning, educator effectiveness, school climate, and culture. During this past school year, these teachers have reinvented our faculty meetings to become opportunities for exploration and reflection on our school culture and climate. From this activity, the faculty worked together to create a living Briarcliff Middle School mission statement that will guide us as we work on all of the tenets of the CAR model. The faculty is excited to move forward, continuing to meet in PLC's that are characterized by active collaboration and shared leadership with a focus on curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The faculty at Briarcliff puts students first in all of their decision-making. They understand that a positive student-teacher relationship allows for learning to take place. In all classes, one can find that the climate for student and adult learning is marked by mutual respect, shared leadership, and high expectations for all students. As life for our young adolescents becomes more tumultuous, complicated and stressful, our teachers began to express their concern and started brainstorming different ways to support them. The development of Student Advisory, is one example of the programs our teachers are creating to address the

academic, social and emotional well-being of all students.

In addition to the academic program, Briarcliff Middle School students are given the opportunity to choose individual activities through the Personal Enrichment Program (PEP). This program encourages students to investigate, predict, invent, imagine, and compare. It also nurtures personal growth, development in making choices; it teaches self-motivation and acceptance of others and their ideas.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The Briarcliff faculty has a long history of incorporating compelling instructional strategies to successfully impart the core curriculum standards to all students. Briarcliff was an early adapter of Innovative Designs for Education and received formal training from Carol Ann Tomlinson on Differentiated Instruction, and from Grant Wiggins on Understanding By Design. Our district's Long Range Educational Plan holds as its primary focus a commitment that all students can learn and all students can offer significant contributions to the learning of their peers. Briarcliff embodies the whole school enrichment model, with limited exceptions, classes are heterogeneously grouped, and all students are encouraged to participate in co-curricular gifted and talented enrichment programs. Our faculty offers students multiple pathways to demonstrate their mastery of curricular standards.

In Reading and Language Arts, faculty develop literature rich classrooms and conduct formative assessments to assist students in continuing to develop their reading fluency and comprehension skills. We have integrated additional non-fiction texts to all student libraries. Our Media Specialist conducts monthly book talks to expose students to a range of young adult literature and promote reading for pleasure. Students facilitate literature circles that involve an array of novels centered on difficult themes such as Genocide, He Who Is Different, and Coming of Age. We pride ourselves on celebrating the literary cannon, and our students read Shakespeare each year. Students must demonstrate mastery of informational, persuasive, expository and personal narrative writing.

We have realigned our mathematics curricula to emphasize Pre-Algebra skills in grade 6. Our innovative 7th and 8th-grade mathematics curriculum integrates grade level content standards and traditional Algebra 1. This approach allows teachers ample time to integrate representation theory and promote engaging opportunities for students to create original models of critical mathematical theorems. While the majority of our students begin high school at the Geometry level, there are a group of students who accelerate the mathematics sequence and complete Geometry in 8th grade. Our students earn state and national level recognition in mathematics competitions and exams.

Our students' passion for mathematics and science is evident in the robust enrollment of our Quizbowl, Robotics, and Destination Imagination teams, all of which have competed at the national level. Each year our students design and build solar cars in the annual Consortium of Gifted and Talented competition where they consistently earn top places in various categories.

In the classroom, our scientists learn to be involved, global citizens who respect and care for the earth. Our students create and maintain sustainable gardens, they monitor and chart waste disposal in the cafeteria, and have made significant strides in reducing the amount of waste our school generates.

While collaboration is everywhere in Briarcliff School, our science teachers have formed exceptional partnerships with the New Jersey Audubon Society, the local Shade Tree Commission, and the Borough Lakes and Woodlands Committee. These partnerships have allowed for interesting field trips to the local watershed and the launching of our Annual Water Cycle Science Symposium. At this symposium, students share their original research on the quality and scarcity of fresh water sources locally and globally. Advanced Placement students from the high school assist in the execution of several laboratory classes each year. Through a sequence of Earth, Life and Physical Science, our Briarcliff students emerge from their studies as intellectually curious and informed young scientists.

The League of Women Voters is another organization that actively collaborates with our students and schools. Each year the League offers educational programs on lake safety and municipal government. When delivering the social studies curriculum, each teacher endeavors to create lessons that require students to participate in community service and evaluate the effectiveness of local, state and federal policies.

A review of our School Performance Report proves that our experienced faculty, collaborative school environment and caring community partners deliver Blue Ribbon quality instruction for all students.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The Briarcliff School Community believes that young adolescents need to explore. To honor this, the school hosts courses that meet each day and rotate every seven weeks. All students take Art, Health, Technology, and Music. Students in Sixth grade take a World Language and can select French or Spanish. Seventh graders take a Communications class, and our Eighth graders take Sign-Language. There are also optional courses for students including Debating, Impromptu Speaking, Solar Sprints, and The United Nations Experience, Maker-Space, Animation, Computer Science, and Robotics. Students truly enjoy and have fun during these classes.

Art provides the students an opportunity to research various eras and cultures and create work that reflects their personal interest. Six graders create works of art by reading about fish around the world. They create Zenangles in the shape of one of the fish and masks in the theme of an African animal. Seventh graders see art through urban graffiti. They create a global graffiti design onto their own t-shirt. A culminating project allows students to create a mural. Eighth graders examine art as a possible career. Using graphic art skills, the students create magazine covers, advertisements, and design a board game.

Our Art Animation class allows students to take their artistic abilities to a more advanced level as they learn about stop motion animation movie making. A mass media class will be offered next year, complete with a television studio set-up.

Students take our Physical Education and Leadership Development class every day. Students are exposed to personal training, individual and team sports as well as other activities. Students learn foundational exercises, methods, and techniques for developing their personal training repertoire. Stations are set up in the gym, and students move through the activities at their pace and can modify the task as needed. Students record their results and then conference with their teacher to discuss strategies for improvement and growth. Students also participate in Sport and Cooperative Games. Students focus on life lessons learned as the main component of fair play while developing personal skills, game strategies, and leadership.

World Languages provide students with a chance to excel in a challenging academic environment. Culturally, students are introduced to Hispanophone/Francophone cultures around the world and focus on one particular country over their two years of study. The seventh and eighth grade classes prepare students to enter the second year of a language in High School.

Communication: In today's world of excessive text messaging and electronics, this class provides students with important interpersonal, verbal communication skills. Students are instructed in the elements of communication electronically and verbally. Learning the six ingredients to becoming an effective communicator culminates with students presenting speeches. Students can choose Persuasive, Impromptu, or they can create a Public Service Announcement (in the form of an iMovie)

The Sign Language course is an introduction to basic expressive and receptive Sign Language. Students also learn about the history of the Deaf community and "Deaf Culture." Students learn the Manual Alphabet and develop a sign language vocabulary.

Computers/Robotics: Computer course is taught using projects that integrate with other areas of the curriculum. The program focuses on improving student self-reliance and confidence with the computer. In the robotics program, students design and build a robot to accomplish specific tasks. One of the most valuable lessons learned is that it is not necessarily bad to fail. Students go back to the drawing board and devise new strategy. They participate in competitions within the school, and some students compete against other teams in the state.

General Music: Briarcliff classes focus on the fundamentals of music and music appreciation. Students use classroom instruments as well as music technology programs to explore and create music. Students are exposed to different eras of music history and elements of music theory. Students create and perform operas, rap and Broadway music for their families and friends.

Students perform all styles of concert band music. The band meets on an A/B schedule throughout the year. Lessons are offered once each week. The program is open to anyone regardless of their grade and proficiency. The Jazz Band is also open to students; they meet twice a week during a zero period.

The choral program is designed to provide students with many vocal experiences. Through diligent cooperative experiences in singing, students explore the necessary discipline required to elevate their performance.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

At Briarcliff, we realize that in the 21st century, our students need to be prepared to live as global citizens. Our curriculum challenges students to acquire knowledge of the diverse people with whom they share this world. Moreover, as the world is experiencing a virtual revolution in information and communication technologies, we have Briarcliff students acquire and critically evaluate the abundance of information through PARCC-aligned Language Arts nonfiction readings. We have also updated our 21st-century technology skills, moving from tutorials on Window-based suite, to a curriculum that has added coding and robotics. Consequently, our curricula go through annual revisions to ensure that our students will be ready for their future.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

It all begins with a caring staff. Our teachers believe that each student's' success is based on their needs to feel safe, accepted and valued. From the moment students enter Briarcliff until they graduate, they are cloaked in the school's warmth and supportive climate. On the first day of school teachers are outside greeting the students to welcome their return. Students excitedly look for their teachers to say hello and share summer experiences. They especially look for the teacher taking photographs commemorating their first day of school. Pictures are added throughout the year and by June students have a timeline that celebrates the entire school year.

The teachers have a duty period each day but are only required to meet formally one time a week. Nonetheless, the teachers meet every day to discuss their children. Their meetings often include the school counselor and the school support teachers. They share their impressions of students, concerns, ideas and suggestions. They look at data and utilize it to inform their planning.

Members of our school community understand that to engage and motivate, our students must feel connected to the school. Classrooms are colorful, warm and welcoming. Student work is displayed with pride, teachers learn the names of their students quickly and engage them in conversation in the halls, lunchrooms and during their reinforcement period (a set time which allows students to visit teachers and work with them in small groups). Reinforcement sends a strong message to students that teachers want them to be successful.

The Personalized Enrichment Period (PEP) is another time when students feel that they are cared for socially, academically and emotionally. Teachers create opportunities and programs based on student interest. A visitor to the school might see a Harry Potter Class, Breadmaking, Rocketry, Maker-Space Creators working, Nature Walks, an Animation Workshop, Keyboarding Skills, Student Success Skills, and a Computer Science Coding class. Students pick three activities each marking period, giving them the opportunity to have a voice in what is important to them, and providing them a risk-free opportunity to explore and grow.

The school culture is a positive one where teachers arrive early and often stay late to work with students and lead co-curricular activities. Teachers know that they are supported and valued throughout the year. Formally they are vested in team meetings and faculty meetings where their participation is solicited. Teachers often lead the meetings, and the Principal is a participant actively listening. The Principal maintains an open-door policy and teachers and staff see that their ideas, concerns, and vision for Briarcliff are honored.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Mountain Lakes School District has always maintained that strong, positive ties between family, community, and school are vital to the success of each child. Supportive organizations such as the Home and School Association, Friends of the Arts, and The Mountain Lakes Education Foundation strive to support the school's mission and provide needed resources. Stakeholders meet regularly to discuss how they can help support student success and school improvement. They have provided equipment for the Performing and Fine Arts Program, establishing a mini-TV studio, bringing in a Shakespeare program, buying Chromebooks, and they have plans to create a 6th grade Science Lab. These resources have helped improve the school program by enriching the curriculum and addressing the varying learning styles of our students. There is a Principal Advisory Committee made up of members from Home and School. During their monthly meetings, parents are invited to share their opinions, air concerns, and give suggestions through these representatives that relate to student success and school improvement. Minutes are sent to all families to keep them involved and aware of Briarcliff happenings even when their busy lives do not afford them the opportunity to be in school.

The School Climate/School Safety Committee is made up of school staff, parents, and the principal. Last year they created a survey about school climate and invited teachers, students, and parents to participate. Knowing that student achievement and school climate are linked, they looked at the results and began to explore the possibility of having Student Advisory groups starting in the 2017-2018 school year. This program will provide students with a teacher advocate who can help mentor them through their middle school experience.

Teachers believe that communication with parents and the community is essential in providing the supports students need to be successful. Along with the typical emails and phone calls, two days were set aside for parents to visit and experience their child's classes. Conferences are held formally once a year, and the school counselor will invite parents in to meet with her and other teachers to discuss challenges a student may face. During the year, assemblies are held to honor Briarcliff Student achievements. Academic Achievement, Community Service, Co-Curricular participation are a few things that are acknowledged during this event. Briarcliff also provides a seasonal newsletter to parents sharing successes and challenges faced by the school. A Facebook page keeps parents in the loop and allows them to feel a part of the school happenings.

3. Professional Development:

Briarcliff School has always been dedicated to ensuring the professional development of its staff. Like our approach to instruction with our students, the approach to professional development is teacher-centered, authentic and differentiated.

There are several levels of professional development at Briarcliff. At the district level, all teachers complete several courses on Safe Schools—an online course delivery system that allows teachers to work at their pace and choose some optional courses in addition to required courses. The district Professional Development Committee consists mostly of teachers and is dedicated to making sure the PD provided to teachers is relevant and useful. All PD opportunities presented generate from teacher surveys as to what they currently need in their classrooms. Recent PD opportunities have centered on the implementation of our blended learning delivery system, Canvas, and the Social and Emotional aspects of learning.

At the school level, our School Improvement Committee (SciP) reinforces the work of the District Committee. We held a self-directed Canvas workshop at the end of the 2015-2016 school year that allowed teachers to receive differentiated and personalized instruction. We have recently begun to reinforce the idea of the Social and Emotional aspects of learning in our building. We have used faculty meeting time to work together to formulate a Mission Statement for our building, and we are currently using team and faculty time to learn about and discuss the implementation of an Advisory program to help meet the social, emotional and academic needs of our students.

PD also includes parents and students. An example is how Briarcliff handled the newest research on whether homework is beneficial for student learning. Briarcliff formed a committee of parents, teachers, students and administrators who came together to study the issue, conduct surveys, analyze the data and created guidelines for middle school homework.

Teachers are encouraged and supported in pursuing their professional development goals. The district-wide Professional Development Institute provides a variety of teacher-led courses and Professional Learning Communities on topics such as technology, special needs, and teaching strategies. Many teachers attend conferences such as the New Jersey Association of Middle-Level Education conference or subject-specific conferences.

This broad variety of PD opportunities ensures that our teachers receive training that is relevant to their classrooms. It also places a significant emphasis on stepping outside our practice and reflecting on how we can be better educators and serve our students more effectively.

4. School Leadership:

There is no one leader at Briarcliff Middle School. All stakeholders in the school community are seen as partners in the decision-making process. Teachers are honored and respected for their expertise and capacity to lead. Decisions are rarely made top-down. The Superintendent's words and actions epitomize this as she often seeks teacher input, and honors their expertise and experience. Recently, she sent congratulatory letters to many teachers for their outstanding attendance. She also proudly noted that Briarcliff traditionally had exemplary attendance, "which is a clear indicator of their dedication to the students and the community."

The Principal has been in the school for less than two years, but it is apparent that she has a very distinct leadership style. She was educated in a program that has its roots in Servant Leadership. Her door is always open, and she lets the faculty know that she values their individual opinions even when they are different than hers. Her top priorities are to cultivate a culture of trust and build community. She is firmly committed to the growth of the teachers, so that they feel comfortable and able to expand their leadership roles at Briarcliff. An example of this is her use of surveys. When she arrived at Briarcliff and would ask for teacher opinions, there was little discussion. Teachers appeared to be concerned about opening up. She started providing anonymous surveys to give teachers voice and then would share the results with the teachers. This opened up productive dialogues and grew the philosophy of shared leadership and collaboration.

The teachers and Principal meet weekly to discuss the "pulse" of the school community. These meetings are always lively with teachers identifying needed areas of growth, celebrations, success, as well as concerns. Not satisfied with mediocracy, teacher-leaders emerge with suggestions and strategies for improvement. They provide leadership by setting the agenda for future meetings to share research and data to the faculty and staff. The collegial faculty facilitates a willingness to listen, engage in reflective discussion and be open to change or growth where necessary. An example was when the question of homework came up in the district. The teachers were anxious to take a leadership role in this investigation. They volunteered to be on the committee, led a faculty workshop, and created a PowerPoint to share with the Board of Education and community. This endeavor resulted in new suggestions and comments. Teachers feel empowered and appreciative that their expertise is honored. Teachers are inspired and frequently take on leadership roles even in challenging situations.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Briarcliff School utilizes a holistic approach in offering a comprehensive program which provides all the tenets necessary for each student's academic success. Examples of the practices offered are school counseling services, strategies and intervention classes, reinforcement periods and after school homework help. A full-time school counselor is available to all students, teachers, and parents.

The Briarcliff School counseling program is recognized as an essential, integral part of the middle school educational process. The school counseling program provides comprehensive, developmental counseling to address the academic, emotional, career and personal/social needs of all students. The counselor serves as a student advocate recognizing the uniqueness, dignity and personal worth of each student. Working collaboratively with students, parents, educators and community members to support each student's ability to contribute at the highest level as productive members of society is a fundamental part of Briarcliff's school counseling program.

Briarcliff partners with an outside service provider to offer embedded therapeutic services to students to help them overcome the emotional difficulties that can interfere with academic and social functioning. With the right therapeutic approach in place, students have found renewed confidence and success both academically and emotionally.

The Strategies and Intervention program is an academic intervention system for students in need of academic and/or study skill support and reinforcement. It is offered to students who need some scaffolding or for students who need extensive remediation. This program follows a targeted learning curriculum which tracks students' progress using alternative, creative strategies, and assessments. Students will have appropriate intervention from the area of weakness and/or remediation of a grade-level skill as per the content of the curriculum. Collaboration with the content area teachers provides students with optimal skill development and/or strategies to aid in student success. The assessments yield data that is invaluable to the classroom teacher who then can personalize the lessons to meet the needs of that student.

Scheduled reinforcement periods, held during the school day, provide all students with an opportunity to meet with their teachers in addition to their assigned class period. These periods allow students to reflect on their work and develop self advocacy and executive functioning skills.

An afterschool homework club, staffed by a certified middle school teacher, provides academic support and encouragement for students as they tackle their homework. Integral to the vision of the school is to ensure that all students have the opportunity to receive support when needed.