

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 2018 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 2012 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: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
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 (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 7 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 9 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
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	11	4	15
K	37	46	83
1	47	37	84
2	39	42	81
3	31	41	72
4	50	39	89
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	215	209	424

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 4 % Asian
 - 27 % Black or African American
 - 46 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 15 % White
 - 7 % 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 2016 – 2017 school year: 24%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

We have a highly mobile community in West Haven, in general, and Forest School attracts families coming from other countries.

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, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	55
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	51
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	106
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	445
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.24
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	24

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 29 %
121 Total number ELL

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

Arabic, Cambodian, Creole-Haitian, French, Mandarin, Navajo, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, Ten, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese, Wolof

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 77 %
Total number students who qualify: 327

8. Students receiving special education services: 19 %
80 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>5</u> Autism | <u>4</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>7</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>13</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>23</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>28</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 13
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, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	22
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	17
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	12
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 20:1

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

Required Information	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	95%	95%	95%
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 2017.

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.

Forest Elementary School faculty and staff are committed to a philosophy that all children can learn by building character, fostering respect, and inspiring a quest for knowledge to achieve success for all students.

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

Forest School is located in the Allingtown section of West Haven, Connecticut. The district is an urban district outside of New Haven with six elementary schools (PK – 4), one intermediate school (grades 5-6), one middle school (grades 7-8) and one high school (9-12). All schools are identified as free milk/free lunch eligible. The district level leadership consists of a superintendent, an assistant superintendent, and central office coordinators who work collaboratively with building level leadership and staff to support the teaching and learning in all academic areas. Forest School (PK-4) is a Title I school with population of 453 students, 82.7% minority, 80 special education (SPED) students, 121 English learner (EL) students, and 77% low income students. The school has the largest EL populations of in West Haven with over 16 different home languages.

Forest uses a model of shared leadership. The principal collaborates with staff and district curriculum coordinators to provide structure, resources, and training to support teachers. Identified school-wide needs are addressed with the building's mathematics coach, the reading consultant, the SPED teachers, and the EL teachers. These individuals provide support to classroom teachers through modeling lessons, demonstrating instructional strategies, and providing resources. They also provide explicit student support in small groups with an emphasis in the early grades. "All Children Can Succeed", is the Forest School mantra. More specifically, students have multiple opportunities to be successful and no less is expected of them. Teacher professional learning is during real time instruction, thus creating a learning environment and ethos which is sustainable over time. All staff maintain critical roles in grade level and school based data teams, as well as collaboration teams where the instructional needs and strengths of students are identified and addressed. Instruction is personalized and differentiated relative to the student's learning style.

In order to best address the needs of the Forest population and ensure successful participation in school activities, Forest teachers capitalize on the research based instructional strategies which best address student needs. Teacher lesson plans and curricula focus on integration of the five tenets of learning: listening, speaking; reading; writing; and thinking. Best practices include explicit instruction in reading, development of listening and speaking skills, emphasis on non-fiction writing, and high expectations for all youngsters. Youngsters learn skills which are reinforced within their Tier I, Tier II or Tier III instruction, using Scientific Research Based Interventions (SRBI) support by EL teachers, literacy and mathematics teachers, and special education staff. SRBI practices include an ongoing, embedded professional development design in the teaching of reading, writing, listening, speaking and thinking. Of most importance is the consistency and delivery with which curricula and strategies are delivered over time.

Forest School follows a schedule that provides core and support instruction with back to back periods of ELA/reading and mathematics in full day kindergarten through fourth grades. The schedule also reflects the longest uninterrupted blocks of learning during the earliest part of the day for its youngest learners. Achieving success for all students is a task that encompasses the whole child and truly, the whole village. Staff work with youngsters to build confidence, self-worth, and respect in all students. Forest utilizes two character initiatives during the school year that recognize citizenship, academics, manors, and appropriate behavior. The social worker and school psychologist provide lessons from a character building perspective (Second Step) program. Positive behavioral supports increase awareness of behaviors and sensitivity to differences.

Forest has earned the Connecticut School of Distinction award for "high needs growth" twice in the last three years as measured by the Next Generation Accountability Report. Forest School will continue with their successful journey in making a difference for all of our students.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Forest School adheres to the West Haven School District curricula in all content areas. Curricula are based upon the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), the Next Generation of Science Standards (NGSS), and the CT Social Studies Frameworks. All District staff were trained in the development and use of the Rigorous Curriculum Design (Ainsworth, 2010). The Design is a road map for developing course content, scope and sequence, which includes common assessments, pacing guides, performance tasks/assessments, and unit planners. All core curricula are aligned both vertically and horizontally within the subject/grade level areas using this process.

Curricula in all areas stress high expectations for all youngsters regardless of their needs. Core curricula instruction begins with the classroom teacher (Tier 1 instruction). Forest School implements all curricula and assessments with fidelity and consistency. These characteristics of our school compounded with appropriate professional learning and resources, directly impact student achievement and ensure closing the gap between high needs students and the general education population, as our data at Forest School clearly demonstrates.

Standards begins at the PK level where youngsters who require a head start, as identified through Connecticut's Birth to Three program and our School Readiness program, attend our School with age appropriate youngsters. The standards that the PK curriculum are based on are the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (CTELDS). This alignment to our kindergarten standards (CCSS) prepares the youngsters for a successful full day kindergarten experience.

Forest School has a very large English learner (EL) population, is a Title I school, and has an economically disadvantaged population. The curricula at Forest School incorporates and emphasizes the importance of creating multiple opportunities for every student to read, write, listen, speak and think. These tenants are explicitly incorporated into the curricula and modeled in classrooms at Forest School. Teacher conversations held during scheduled data team and collaboration meetings focus on implementation of the curricula and research based instructional strategies, which are designed to support student needs. Additionally, school-wide data teams ensure alignment of the curricula both horizontally and vertically, utilizing data to support intervention decisions, curricula revisions, and further assessments.

The science curricula has been revised and implemented based on the NGSS (standards). Performance tasks are a very common instructional methodology in science. Classroom laboratory experiments which emphasize vocabulary and writing through science content and theory are common. Science teachers plan their performance tasks around engaging scenarios to reinforce new learnings and assessment student generalization of information.

Social Studies curricula has also been recently revised and aligned to reflect the new Social Studies Frameworks (standards). Through social studies, students are reading non-fiction texts, responding to questions and making predictions. Many lessons in social studies focus on discussion and research about important civic lessons. Art and music activities are aligned to units in social studies and provide much enrichment to the student's lessons.

At Forest School, the core curriculum is the blueprint for success. The principal and district coordinators collaborate to support the delivery of the curriculum with consistency and fidelity across all grades. The math coach and reading consultant assist in monitoring curriculum delivery, as well as, providing embedded professional development to support all teachers. At the heart of every core curriculum is the expectation that all student can learn.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The Rigorous Curriculum Model was used to write curricula for all subject areas, including the arts and physical education. Curriculum includes tasks and assessments as fundamental means to support student learning in all academic areas. Curriculum areas are based on Connecticut standards in music, art, library media and physical education. All curriculum is based on state/national standards.

Students are provided with a safe, affirming, and enriched environment for participatory and inclusive learning by way of the engaging scenario in the performance task. In designing the performance assessment, students are provided with a rubric with defined expectations, which allow students time to process, think and work through the task. As a result, they are given the chance to consider all possibilities without merely regurgitating all classroom information. Setting high expectations within performance tasks in all subject areas, shows that students will rise to the occasion.

All PK-4 students participate in all school enrichment offerings: art, music, science lab, library, physical education and computer assisted instruction. Forest School has certified teachers in art, music, library, physical education and science. Students have a minimum of one enrichment class per day. Literacy skills, such as reading, writing, listening, speaking and thinking, are integrated into each offering.

At Forest School, all Kindergarten classrooms incorporate brain-researched movement enhancement curriculum into their physical education curriculum. Classes are scheduled for Movement Enhanced Learning (MEL) one out of a ten-day cycle. MEL is co-taught by our Physical Education Teacher, classroom teacher, paraprofessionals, and when possible, the music teacher. MEL is offered in the gymnasium and uses a series of learning stations to actively engage students in the learning process using movement to support literacy and numeracy learning. At the beginning of the school year, students practice their letters and numbers as they move through each station performing such activities as bouncing a ball and walking a balance beam, to name a few. As the year progresses, the stations focus on students reinforcing sounds, blends, sight words and math facts, while participating in a monitored physical activity.

General music curricula includes recorder lessons in grades three to four, folk dancing lessons and activities and chorus. The third and fourth grade participate in an Opera performance, written and directed by a production company. Clearly, the integration of the arts and literacy skills are evident here. Art instruction focuses on supporting grade level curricula through a variety of art mediums such as sculpting, painting, and creating masks for the opera. Computer assisted instruction is a daily class that uses a variety of programs to reinforce their basic skills. Instructional programs are monitored by classroom teachers and regularly adjusted, based on student needs.

As a result, all curriculum units within the district, both enrichment and core, offer students the opportunity every day to read, write, listen, speak and think during all learning activities. This focus speaks to success for all students as our data plainly reveals.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Research based instructional methods, interventions, and assessments have been the mainstay of the school and district professional learning series. At Forest School, literacy and numeracy are the core of the instructional day. A reader/writer workshop model is integrated into the literacy block to provide all students with opportunities to read, write, reflect, and apply these critical literacy skills to other content areas. Teachers integrate the center model (Daily 5) into their classrooms to allow students to hear literature, to practice vocabulary, to write using various genres of writing, and to participate in guided reading groups all at their instructional level. Special education, regular education and EL teachers collaborate to support the identified area of need for all students. Teacher do not only address students at risk, but also address those students who require more challenging and enriching tasks. All classrooms are heterogeneously grouped and provide high expectations for all youngsters. Both a push-in and pull out model of support is employed at Forest School to allow all staff to be present in the classroom every day. Examples of this include a new arrivals class for youngsters recently entering the system and a push in class where special education teachers sit at one of the centers to support student needs.

Mathematics Scientific Research Based Interventions (SRBI) mimic the center model for literacy described above. SRBI is also known as Response to Intervention, or RTI on the federal level. Students are working with mathematics vocabulary by using manipulatives, drawing pictures, and writing sentences to best articulate the process used to address a word problem. For example, journals are utilized in mathematics to provide students with opportunities to reflect on their learning and provide explanations for skills explored that day.

The staff in all classrooms use grade level collaboration time and data teams to review and monitor student progress. Every staff member has been trained in the five step data team process. Data team and collaboration time are scheduled twice during a ten-day cycle and provide a venue with which all teachers review student progress. In emphasizing collaboration, grade-level unit leaders electronically share “Push in Planning Sheets” with all ancillary and itinerant staff. These sheets contain information on grade level academic skills so the entire staff can cross disciplines when appropriate to support academics in the classroom.

To continue the journey in delivering instruction and ensuring success for all, Forest School uses SRBI to provide tiered instruction to all students in Tiers 1 through 3, with Tier 1 being universal instruction that all students receive in the classroom setting. This model ensures that classroom teachers are responsible for the general education of all students. Differentiated instruction is developed and implemented by the data team to ensure that students receive appropriate instruction, interventions, and support. SRBI emphasizes the use of scientific research-based practices with a systems approach to education. The reading specialist and the mathematics coach examine trend data across grade levels. Analysis is used to inform research based strategies that impact student performance.

To achieve the goals set for students, the following technology supports are used: Reading A-Z, BrainPOP, Splash Math, Newsela (grade 4), Lexia Reading, and Symphony Math. These are some instructional resources utilized to not only reinforce independence in learning, but also provide enrichment activities. In grades 2 - 4, the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) data is used for examining student growth over time through grade 11 and provides a venue to monitor student progress, adjust teaching and learning, and revise curricula. Other assessments which provide ways to gauge student progress include the common assessments and performance based assessments aligned to the state standards and developed by teachers for teachers for each of the instructional units.

Forest School follows a schedule that provides core and support instruction with back to back periods in ELA and mathematics. Support staff provide tiered instruction in all grades for all students in their caseloads via pull-out or push-in. The mathematics coach and reading consultant model lessons in the classrooms to strengthen areas of concern uncovered during data teams. These model lessons are developed to support Tier 1 instructional practices and content pedagogy. There is no achievement gap at Forest School because at the heart of all instructional strategies and remedial support is the collective expectation that all students can and will succeed.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Forest School embraces the district’s motto: Success for All Students. In order for all students to be successful, we must help students build confidence, self-worth, and respect each other’s differences. Much is done to develop respect between students, teachers, and the community. Teachers continually reach out to the parents of their students to celebrate progress and to engage parental support.

Forest School implements Burwell’s Shining Stars to provide positive behavior support and reinforcement for all students. Students earn stars anytime during the day, including time on the school bus, as rewards for citizenship, manners, and appropriate conduct. The stars are then put into a raffle drawing for prizes such as school supplies, special lunch seating for the student and a friend, as well as chances to sing karaoke during recess on Fun Fridays.

The School Climate Committee is led by teachers for teachers. Teachers support each other through social situations and celebrations, such as sunshine clubs, birthday celebrations, staff luncheons during holidays, and staff breakfasts for celebrations of excellence. Most recently, teachers have received a parking space in recognition of becoming staff member of the week. Staff is recognized for attendance, student achievement, and support to colleagues by the principal. The principal sees himself as the cheerleader of all staff and students and continually seeks out resources to support instructional and social activities.

Forest School has developed a school currency program that allows students to earn “Burwell Bucks” for ordinary routines, including but not limited to, classwork and homework. Burwell Bucks are spent at our school store to purchase school supply items. Additionally, in order for students to be successful, students also need to be “Here!” “Here!” is the Superintendent’s school attendance initiative that began two years ago with a focus on reducing excessive absences. Students with perfect attendance are recognized during bi-monthly all-school assemblies, where each student receives a certificate and raffle ticket. One student per grade wins a Barnes and Noble gift card, while eight students from a designated grade level wins “lunch with the Principal.” During lunch with the Principal, students are seated around a family style table alongside the principal where they practice speaking and communication skills.

Developing and implementing these recognition and positive support programs afford students the opportunity to increase their awareness of the most fundamental behaviors for success in life. Sensitivity to individual differences, along with manners, respect, and confidence make Forest School an inviting place to be. As a result, students are motivated and engaged in their learning, which contributes to success for all students at Forest School.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Forest School offers opportunities to engage families in their child’s learning, such as open house, parent conference, and one hundred day celebrations. The mathematics and reading departments provide “Family Literacy Nights.” Each family completes an exit survey and based upon the results, future family nights are planned to ensure that Forest School is meeting the needs of the community and parents. In the past, activities have included theatrical productions of children’s books, author presentations, mathematics carnivals, and a family Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) night. Transportation is provided to families who make a request and all families are served dinner before they participate in the literacy night.

During each literacy night, staff work collaboratively to plan, design, and implement authentic learning opportunities for the parents. During the sessions, parents engage in a variety of activities that expose them to key academic vocabulary, authentic learning tasks, and resources that can be implemented at home to strengthen the home to school connection. Furthermore, the English learner teachers at Forest School diligently work with parents of English learners to provide both academic and non-academic supports. Frequent parent meetings, phone calls and conferences between the EL teacher, classroom teacher, and

parents occur in order to provide supports from school to home. As a result of these encounters, the EL community is extremely comfortable with the staff at Forest School, thus resulting in an environment that is warm, caring and inviting to all.

Forest School also values community engagement. Guest readers are invited into the classrooms throughout the school year. Many times, the guest readers are parents and students are excited to determine who the surprise guest reader will be. However, not all guest readers are parents. In fact, local members of the fire and police departments, along with the Mayor and central office administrators often fulfill this role. Readers from local business organizations such as Target, Rotary Club, and United Way donate their time to enter the classrooms at Forest School and read with the children. Members of sports teams from the University of New Haven are invited and scheduled on a regular basis to work with students in designated classrooms.

By including and engaging family and community members, a positive relationship between the school and home has emerged. The efforts of all staff and community members strengthen communication and provide a safe learning community for all. These partnerships show the importance and value in education for all stakeholders working together to ensure the academic and non-academic success of all students.

3. Professional Development:

Forest School embraces the district philosophy around professional learning for all staff and supports the work of the Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC). In West Haven, professional learning provides educators with a venue to enhance student growth, both academic and nonacademic, in alignment with district goals; provides opportunities to actively refine one's practice in a relevant, meaningful, sustainable, and supportive environment; and, requires that all educators reflect upon their own practice, share their knowledge through collaboration, and have equitable access to professional learning opportunities.

The district has developed a multi-year plan for professional learning to address both academic and non-academic professional learning opportunities for all staff. The plan is comprehensive to ensure that all learning standards, including social emotional supports, are continually supported during professional learning time. The plan is shared with the Professional Development and Evaluation Committee, administration, and teaching staff so that a common vision for continued professional learning to support student achievement is communicated to all stakeholders. Professional learning opportunities for all staff at Forest School are planned in collaboration with central office leaders and school based teacher leaders. Review of data in core content areas, as well as social emotional needs, is at the forefront of devising professional learning opportunities for staff that are purposeful, meaningful and transferable to their classrooms.

In addition, data teams and collaborative planning meetings are utilized at Forest School to provide additional embedded professional learning for staff. During these times, grade level teachers receive specialized professional learning from experts in reading, mathematics, science, special education, and English language learners. The professional learning focuses on providing opportunities for teachers to expand and deepen their instructional strategies around core content standards.

Furthermore, the experts at Forest School consult with the principal and central office leaders to reflect on the progress of the staffs' professional learning. Being reflective allows for the professional learning plan to be fluid and continually evolving to ensure that the needs of all staff are supported, thus resulting in targeted instruction leading to increased student performance. Success for all students is at the heart of the professional learning plan, which integrates the district model that every student should have the opportunity to read, write, listen, speak and think during all learning activities.

4. School Leadership:

With the district's rigorous curriculum model in place and the journey underway, the focus of leadership is to support staff at the building level. Forest School nurtures the district's philosophy of "Success for All

Students.” A banner with this statement hangs above the main entrance as a daily reminder to all that enter the building and the sentiment is echoed in the principal’s belief that all students learn differently and at different paces. When staff recognize the differences, a clear path to success emerges. Leadership at Forest School comprises a layered shared leadership approach, with the principal as part of the team. Collaboration with district curriculum coordinators and staff provides structure, resources, training, and strategies to meet student needs. The special education team, reading specialist, math coach, and EL team share the next level of building leadership. Their roles include screening children, as well as providing resources/strategies, training, model lessons, and embedded professional development to staff. Additionally, the reading specialist and mathematics coach have critical roles leading data and collaboration teams, while supporting the principal’s vision. Their roles allow them to analyze data and identify trends in strengths and weaknesses around literacy and numeracy. With data driving instruction, the teacher leaders work closely with the principal to advise teachers of the path to be taken to support student achievement. The relationship between the principal and teacher leaders is an essential component to ensuring that all students can learn. Such partnership, allows teacher leaders to communicate and support teachers, while preserving the trust needed so that teachers are comfortable reaching out for needed resources, strategies, or support.

Forest School also employs another layer of shared leadership by utilizing unit leaders. It is their responsibility to work closely with the all layers of leadership. Unit leaders collaborate with all teachers to share best practices, analyze data, determine needs of all students to be supported in SRBI, and identify areas for professional development. Through these layers of leadership, we maintain an effective learning environment that focuses on student achievement and results in success for all students.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Academic success at Forest School is the result of a commitment made by school leadership, faculty, and staff to the foundational principle that “all students can succeed.” All staff believe in every student and utilize all resources to support the students in demonstrating mastery of grade level standards in all content areas, but in particular literacy and numeracy. Collaboration and data team time is sacred and led by the principal in cooperation with grade level teams, teacher leaders in literacy/numeracy and support staff (EL and SPED). These collaborative learning communities put data teams into action and allow for professional discourse around curriculum, instructional strategies, student successes, and areas of need of additional professional development. During each session, the message is consistent and focused on what students need to be proficient with their grade level skills.

Over the past three school years, Forest School has demonstrated consistent efforts that all students can succeed. This is evident through their recognition as a School of Distinction where the high needs students outperformed the district in ELA and math (2014-2015); a category 2 (statewide report card on a scale 1 – 5, with 1 being the highest) school in 2015-2016; and a School of Distinction for highest growth with high needs students and recognized as a category 1 (statewide report card on a scale 1-5, with 1 being the highest) school in 2016-2017.

The results from Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBA) in literacy and numeracy show consistent progress by all students at Forest School. While the percentage of students scoring a tiered level 3 or 4 (tier 1 – 4, with 1 being the most skill deficient) on the SBA in ELA has remained consistent at 49.7%, mathematics achievement has increased from 33.9% to 47.4%. Over the past three years, students at Forest School have shown steady increases in the percentage of students meeting grade level standards in numeracy. Three years ago, they were 5% points below the state average for mathematics. With their consistent focus on high expectations and a growth mind set, Forest School’s students are now performing at a higher rate (47.4%) than the state average in mathematics (45.6%). With this push in mathematics and the integration of literacy skills into core math instruction, it is expected that literacy skills will also rise as math skills are strengthened and deepened by leveraging essential literacy skills. Even more impressive has been the Next Generation Accountability Results relative to indicator 2 (student growth). High needs student growth in ELA grew 10% points from 2016-2017, while high needs student growth in mathematics increased by 20% points. These growth results substantiate their selection as a School of Distinction. Mathematics at Forest School has continued to exceed the district average for percentage of growth target achieved. During the 2016-2017 school year, all students demonstrated an average of 84.6% of progress towards meeting their personalized growth targets, while high needs students made growth at 89% towards their intended target. These results are phenomenal and far exceed both the state (53.7%) and district (60.5%) averages for student growth in mathematics for high needs students. While the district average percent of growth target achieved for all students was relatively equal with the state average of 61.7%, Forest School again exceeded this average by over 20% points for average growth in mathematics for all students.

The continued success in increasing the percentage of students achieving a Tier level 3 or 4 based on the SBA annual student data (tier 1 – 4, with 1 being the most skill deficient), along with the increase in average percentage of student growth in mathematics at Forest School shows the importance in the delivery of a rigorous curriculum, the power of collaboration, and the incorporation of targeted embedded professional learning by teacher leaders, specifically, the math coach combined with a consistent message by all stakeholders that every student is capable of succeeding.

As a result of this “growth mindset,” all students are demonstrating growth towards their individual growth targets and Forest School does not have an achievement gap. The purposeful use of data to drive informed curriculum decisions and leveraging the expertise of teacher leaders has resulted in high student achievement by all. This focus and continued support by the principal and central office administrators has proven to be a recipe for success at Forest School by ensuring that high expectations are maintained and that all students are reading, writing, listening, speaking and thinking during all aspects of school. When staff collaborate, communicate and reflect, they ensure that every student succeeds.

