

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):
- 9 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 5 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools

19 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	32	47	79
K	33	30	63
1	33	33	66
2	35	32	67
3	30	38	68
4	29	37	66
5	23	25	48
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	242	457

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 5 % Asian
 - 50 % Black or African American
 - 26 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 18 % White
 - 1 % 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: <01%

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

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	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	3
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	454
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<01

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

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

Arabic, Creole-Haitian, Patwa, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tamil

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 59 %
Total number students who qualify: 268

8. Students receiving special education services: 19 %
86 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>8</u> Autism | <u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>15</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>7</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>20</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>27</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>3</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 6
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	2
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.	15
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.	6

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 21:1

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

Required Information	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	95%	96%	95%	95%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 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.

Equity, excellence, and success for all through a high-quality, theme-based education.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

Families are enrolled in the school through a lottery process run by the Connecticut State Department of Education. Families submit an application during the on-time period, which typically runs from October through February. Lottery applicants provide demographic information and may select up to five regional magnet school choices, ranked by their preference 1 – 5. The Connecticut State Department of Education conducts a computer based method of selecting students to be placed in each school following the application closing date. Typically by May, the computerized random lottery fills available seats in magnet school by grade and by Hartford and suburban residents with preference given to applicants who are siblings of current students and applicants who are children of school staff. Applicants who receive placement are sent a placement letter including instructions on how to accept/decline placement. Applicants who do not receive placement in the initial lottery placement round are placed on a waitlist and remain on the waitlist until October 1 unless a placement is offered.

PART III – SUMMARY

University of Hartford Magnet School (UHMS) opened in 2001 and is currently one of sixteen magnet schools operated and managed by the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC). CREC's Division of Magnet Schools operates under the goal "to reduce racial, ethnic and socioeconomic isolation of students by initiating, developing and managing innovative educational programs." The division was established in 1998 as a response to the *Sheff v. O'Neill* desegregation case, in which the State of Connecticut was placed under court order to reduce the racial and socioeconomic isolation of Hartford students. The primary way UHMS achieves its diversity goal is through prospective parent education about the benefits of our educational belief system and program. Interested families are invited to visit and tour our school at any time or attend one of the numerous Open House events held throughout the year. Recruitment efforts are focused on the diverse population of the Greater Hartford area in an effort to replicate this diversity in our classrooms. In addition to school visits, UHMS reaches out to families at several regional magnet school recruitment fairs throughout the year. UHMS presently enrolls 451 students from over 30 Connecticut towns, with 59% of students qualifying for free/reduced meals.

Classrooms are a microcosm of the greater society, diverse in a variety of ways: socio-economically, racially, geographically (town of residence), and culturally. This diversity is embraced and used to deepen our students' knowledge of themselves, each other, and the larger community. Teachers prioritize using materials and resources that reflect the diverse population of our school. Our curriculum allows opportunities for our teachers to integrate multicultural learning throughout all instructional areas. This exploration of diversity is evident in the teachers' choice of literature used for read-alouds. Students are encouraged to think deeply, discuss challenges that people around the world face, share their own stories, and take action.

We encourage our students to think about the impact that they can have on the larger community. A program that affords them this opportunity is our Student Senate. Our Student Senate is representative of our overall student body and works together to design programs to benefit our students, our overall school, and the surrounding community. This group meets weekly and encourages the open sharing of ideas and varied perspectives. They have organized food and fund drives to help families in need and organized school functions to bring families together. Through their work as Student Senators, our students realize their potential power in contributing to and improving their community and the world.

Similar to the Student Senate, our parent organization is unique in that it represents the overall school community. All parents are invited to share their voice and contribute their ideas and time to the school in ways that meet their needs. The parent organization is currently working with the University of Hartford to sponsor a Family Fun Run on campus to benefit the school's extracurricular programming. The parents are highly committed to the school's mission and while many live up to an hour from campus, their belief in having their children attend a diverse school is evident through their actions. It can be a challenge engaging parents when they do not live locally however, this group attempts to offer opportunities to support the school in whatever way the parent is able. No contribution is ever denied or devalued.

Integration of the multiple intelligences is a part of everyday classroom instruction at UHMS and grades are engaged in projects that integrate both content area and arts standards. Research has shown a positive link between increased physical activity and increased brain activity. With this knowledge and the belief in the Multiple Intelligence approach to instruction and learning, UHMS has a 30 minute "Walking Program" each morning. All kindergarten through fifth grade students walk, dance, or exercise together each morning to stimulate physical and brain activity, as well as provide students an opportunity to interact with students from a variety of backgrounds and grade levels.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

UHMS was created in partnership with the University of Hartford as a venture in education through the multiple intelligences. The curriculum uses inquiry and problem-solving as the integrative core and focuses on relationships that exist across all disciplines. Multi-disciplinary academics and arts learning is the vehicle through which the curriculum standards are achieved. The academic goals are aligned with Connecticut Early Learning and Developing Standards (CTELDS), CT Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics, Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), CT Frameworks for Social Studies, and Curriculum Standards for Art, Physical Education, and Music. The standards offer a continuum of skills and knowledge that build across a child's school career, beginning with pre-kindergarten as the foundation.

Core academic courses utilize the district-developed curricula, adapted to integrate theme learning. Following the Understanding by Design (UbD) model developed by Wiggins and McTighe, curriculum documents include essential questions and identify the standards and learning targets that students need to acquire in each unit. The curricula include anchor activities designed and scaffolded for diverse learners and CREC's student population. Formative and summative assessments provide the means to evaluate what the students have learned. CREC's core curricula are updated annually so that they align with both national and state standards and support the development of the CREC Essential Skills for 21st Century Learning (Critical Thinking & Problem Solving; Communication & Collaboration; Creativity & Innovation; and Self-Direction & Resourcefulness). CREC's English/Language Arts and Mathematics documents were revised in 2011 to align to the CT Core Standards. Social Studies documents were revised in 2015 to align to the CT Social Studies Frameworks and Science documents were revised in 2016 to align to the NGSS.

Language Arts

The goal of literacy instruction is for learners to construct meaning and employ language arts for lifelong learning, work, and enjoyment. The curriculum provides that all students read, write, speak, listen, and view to construct meaning of written, visual, and oral texts. Students learn to read with understanding and respond thoughtfully to a variety of texts from many literary periods and cultures. Students learn to write and speak English proficiently to communicate ideas clearly and create works in visual, oral, and written texts. Teachers support students' language arts development through the Reading and Writing Workshop approach. In addition, K-2 teachers supplement the Workshop model with Foundations, a structured language program that supports phonological awareness and phonics development. Inclusive in the teaching is intentional instruction to develop deep comprehension and high level thinking skills. Students learn to read independently for enjoyment and information by connecting the text in meaningful ways. Reading strategies are implemented across content so students can gain the ability to comprehend on any subject they study. In writing, students learn to observe their lives and the world around them and to collect, draft, revise, and publish well-crafted narrative, expository, and persuasive texts. Writing is also integrated across the curriculum so students can gain the ability to express themselves clearly and creatively on any subject they study.

Mathematics

The mathematics curriculum is grounded in the belief that in order for students to be successful in today's highly technical world, they must move beyond rote computation and be able to use mathematics and critical thinking as a powerful tool to solve problems and understand the world around them. UHMS students learn mathematics by making sense of the concepts they study through rich experiences that value active participation, perseverance, and attending to precision both in written and verbal forms. We utilize Math Expressions as a primary resource to explore the CT Core Standards and Math Practices. With a strong focus on number sense, students investigate, share, and discuss ways to decompose numbers using Number Talks, increasing flexibility, efficiency, and fluency. Students at all grade levels: collaborate with peers and investigate real world problems that highlight mathematical concepts and skills; communicate and share strategies (formulaic, conceptual, or procedural) during lessons to explain math concepts or solve problems; practice current skills at their independent level while teachers work with students individually or in small groups; extend their own learning by grappling with challenging mathematics during small group instruction

with flexible grouping and targeted instruction; and engage in various instructional routines such as Number Talks.

Social Studies

The goal of Social Studies instruction is for learners to gain an understanding of the interaction between and among societies and cultures of the past and present world, to understand principles which are uniquely American/democratic, and to apply concepts and understanding as a responsible citizen in a culturally diverse, interdependent world. The Social Studies curriculum addresses Connecticut's Social Studies Frameworks for Grades K-5. As a result of the program, students demonstrate understanding of grade appropriate democratic principles, historical perspectives, and geographic and economic concepts. They are also required to demonstrate their understanding of human influence on environmental systems.

Science

The goal of the science curriculum is for learners to develop their understanding over time, building gradually more complex explanations of the natural and designed world. The curriculum for science embeds the NGSS in Grades K-5 placing a focus on the "how" of science through the Science and Engineering Practices: what real scientists and engineers do as a part of their work in the fields of life, physical, earth space sciences and engineering design. These experiences provide access for all students to become more scientifically literate citizens who can think critically about issues that matter, such as healthcare and our environment. As result of their classroom explorations, students should come to appreciate that science and the current scientific understanding of the world are the result of many hundreds of years of creative human endeavors.

Preschool

Our Pre-K program is aligned to the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards which are the foundation for our K-3 standards. The scope and sequence provides teachers with a balanced approach emphasizing early literacy, oral language (speaking/listening), physical motor development, emergent writing, social/emotional, cognitive, math, and creative development. This balanced approach facilitates explicit and systematic instruction through meaningful experiences, purposeful play, and daily routines. A cycle of intentional teaching is composed of planning experiences to support children's development, gathering information about how they are progressing, and adjusting what is being done to support them based upon this information.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Students at UHMS are afforded an increased exposure and experience with the multiple intelligences when compared to traditional public schools. Students have two periods each week of Music, Bodily-Kinesthetic, and Visual-Spatial. Each of these Essentials provides students a variety of opportunities to experience the intersection of all Intelligences at once. It is not unusual for students in Music to be researching literature, dancing, or doing math. Students in Visual-Spatial class go beyond drawing and painting to examine the historical importance of a particular medium/style, its historical context and the forces (geographic, economic, and cultural) which supported its emergence/stability. Bodily-Kinesthetic classes encourage students to learn about their muscles, heart rate, and ability to interpersonally relate to others.

Ongoing collaborative efforts between all teachers result in integrated lessons and assessments that allow students to learn and express their learning through the different intelligences. One such example of this collaboration exists with our fifth grade team and the music teacher. While investigating and experimenting with sound in their classrooms, students work under the guidance of their Music teacher to design and build their own instrument. The students' final products are collaboratively scored using a rubric which evaluates their understanding of the science concepts as demonstrated by their instrument. Though this is but one example, careful energy and time is invested in integrating the multiple intelligences into all curricular areas, thus promoting the importance of the theme as an integral element of our school.

The Arts (Music/Visual Spatial)

The goal of the arts curricula is to develop skills in visual art and music and an appreciation of the importance of the arts in expressing human experience. The ultimate goal of these curricula is for the learner

to apply their skills and understandings throughout their lifetime. Students develop skills and appreciation of the importance of the arts in expressing the “human experience” across time and cultures. The Arts curriculum embeds Connecticut’s Standards in the Arts including dance, music, theater and visual arts.

Physical Education (Bodily Kinesthetic)

The ultimate goal of the physical education curriculum is for the learner to realize the importance of the physical activities designated to maintain and enhance healthy lifestyles, as well as for them to choose to regularly participate in them. The connection between the science of the human body and physical well-being is emphasized. The curriculum provides that all students receive instruction in physical fitness and the fundamentals of movement.

Library/Technology

During a weekly library class taught by a full-time Library/Media Specialist, K-5 students explore a variety of genres from around the world. They read for information, make connections with characters and themes from around the world, and compare/contrast stories. Students also learn how to research using online and physical resources (encyclopedias, dictionaries, and atlases), as well as how to safely navigate the internet. Encouraging students to become life-long readers and critical consumers of media are the primary goals of our Library.

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3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

As a magnet school focused on Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences, we work diligently to present all material using different modalities to make it accessible to all of our learners. While classroom teachers are primarily responsible for delivering content, our Essentials teachers are also instrumental in teaching the content through arts, movement, music, and literature. Students are also encouraged to demonstrate their learning in meaningful ways using their different intelligences. For example, when learning about the Revolutionary War, our fifth graders often choose to perform a rap, act out a scene in a play, make up a dance or write a poem to showcase their learning. In addition, all essentialist teachers stay informed and support what is happening in the classrooms by providing opportunities for learning content through the arts and movement.

Tier One language arts is taught primarily through an adaptation of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Workshop model. This naturally differentiated model addresses students' needs through direct whole class instruction, guided small groups and conferring one-on-one with students. Each lesson begins with a short mini-lesson where the teacher explicitly models a strategy. Students then use the strategy with some teacher guidance and then independently apply it during independent/buddy reading and writing. Teachers confer with individual students and instruct small groups, providing students with targeted instruction to help them progress to the next level. Students work at their independent reading level and choose their own reading material within the designated unit of study.

Tier One math instruction focuses on problem solving through inquiry. Similar to the workshop model, math instruction begins with an explicitly taught whole-class lesson. Students then work independently at their level while the teacher supports small groups and individuals. Students participate in daily Number Talks, an instructional method focused on building children's number sense through conversations about the student's thinking and problem solving.

Every two months throughout the year, intervention updates are held to review progress and determine students' eligibility for Tier II and III instruction. Teams meet with the intervention coordinator and literacy coach to share their data, learn about the progress of students currently receiving intervention, and make modifications to instructional plans as needed. At the conclusion of every meeting, teachers provide the names of students that are demonstrating areas of need in their classrooms. Assessments are reviewed and a plan is developed for monitoring or initiating Tier II instruction.

At UHMS, we utilize a variety of assessments to measure student achievement. Classroom-based authentic assessments are a part of everyday learning. Reading and writing conferring notes, exit slips, and observations are used in conjunction with standardized assessments results to make instructional decisions – small/strategy group instruction, tiered interventions, and/or re-teaching. Once in Tier II and Tier III intervention, student progress is monitored through a variety of measures, including but not limited to Easy Curriculum-Based Measures, ST Math and Lexia end-of-unit assessments, and running records. Students are monitored bi-weekly by interventionists and monthly by their classroom teachers.

At UHMS, we use a myriad of programs and structures for tiered intervention. The majority of tiered language arts intervention instruction is provided outside of the classroom. Students are seen individually or in small groups four to five days a week for 30 minutes of explicit instruction. A few examples of research-based programs that are utilized are Leveled Literacy Intervention, Road to Reading, and Read Naturally. Tier II math intervention is delivered by interventionists in the classroom during independent and small group work time. Tier III intervention is largely supported through Lexia (language arts) and ST Math.

We have instituted a unique model for addressing the high level of Tier II and III needs in grade one this year. The lowest performing students are brought together in one classroom for approximately 1.25 hours for intense daily literacy instruction. All available trained personnel, including interventionists, literacy coach, and intervention coordinator deliver individualized instruction in an effort to accelerate their learning.

This program has proven effective for the majority of the students, as all students demonstrated significant growth in their phonological awareness skills after its first eight weeks of implementation. Additionally, most students involved in this program advanced by three or four reading levels on the Benchmark Assessment.

In addition to servicing academically at-risk learners, we have made a concerted effort to provide challenges for our highest achieving students. As stated above, our curriculum is naturally differentiated to challenge students through their independent work time and one-on-one conferring. In addition, some of our strongest readers in kindergarten participate in book clubs with a focus on higher-level comprehension. They meet with an interventionist weekly to read and discuss high-level texts. Our highest achieving math students in grade 5 also receive supplementary instruction through Redbird, an adaptive computer-based program that develops students' readiness for algebra.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Our school takes deliberate measures to ensure that we are creating a positive, nurturing climate and culture for all stakeholders. Each year our school participates in the National School Climate Inventory which measures the 13 dimensions of school climate. Students, staff, and parents participate in this survey and we are provided an in-depth profile which we use for school improvement planning.

We employ Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to teach and reinforce school-wide expectations to maintain a respectful, responsible, and safe school environment. This school-wide approach helps to improve our positive school climate, as well as maximize the achievement of all students. Behavior expectations are consistently taught across all grade levels and reinforced by all staff members. This positive reinforcement comes through verbal recognition, Hawkeyes, and postcards sent home. A Hawkeye is a small card that staff members give to students for demonstrating Respectful, Responsible, and Safe behaviors. Students use their earned Hawkeyes to enter raffles to win prizes focused on time with staff members, rather than material objects. Postcards are sent home through the mail as a way to communicate to students and families that their positive choices are valued and noticed.

Our school places a strong emphasis on kindness amongst staff and students. Our Kindness Committee has worked to highlight and reinforce the power of kindness and how it improves the lives and learning of all community members. For example, each week a class is entrusted with Lil' Howie, a small stuffed school mascot, based on their level of kindness throughout the school each week. Taking care of Lil' Howie is an event that all grade levels look forward to and have fun with. The Kindness Committee also leads a weekly recognition program in which students are highlighted for displaying the tenets of a predetermined character trait (i.e., inclusiveness, curiosity, generous) during our weekly all-school meeting.

Supporting our students' social and emotional growth is of the utmost importance and is specifically addressed through our Second Step program. Through this daily instruction, students are taught and given opportunities to practice strategies and skills for getting along with others and doing well in school.

Staff invest great time and effort to develop meaningful relationships with their students and their students' families. This begins in our classrooms with the staff's focus on getting to know their students as learners and as individuals. This relationship is further developed and strengthened through our Parent Intake Conferences which are held during our third week of school. These strong staff-student and staff-family relationships are the key to our students' engagement and commitment to their own learning and the overall school community.

Our students' academic and social-emotional growth results from the tireless work of our teachers and staff. Their love for and investment in our students is deeply valued and we work to ensure that our teachers and staff realize how respected they are. Our respect for their knowledge, their efforts, and their commitment to our children is expressed in both specific, isolated ways and consistent, recurring ways.

Our teachers and staff are afforded numerous opportunities to have a voice in our school and to be a part of the decision making process. They are included in discussions related to hiring, school-wide expectations, daily procedures, instructional practices, and challenges that our school is faced with. These opportunities have allowed us to bring more voices and perspectives into our decision making process and, thus, allowed for a more positive and collaborative school culture. Teachers are instrumental in determining a child's need for academic and/or behavioral support and play a key role in shaping the form the support takes.

To begin each school year, teachers are welcomed back with a letter expressing our admiration and appreciation for the work that they do with our students and inviting them to a homemade breakfast on their first day back together. Teachers and staff are also recognized weekly through our Staff Shout Outs, a school-wide announcement of appreciation for a specific action by a staff member to make a positive impact on our school.

We believe that our teachers deserve consistent and focused support throughout the school year. Teachers have weekly grade level seminar time. During this time, teachers meet with administrators, our Literacy Coach, Intervention Coordinator, Math Specialist, or Science Coordinator. This time allows teachers to collaboratively plan, focus on instructional strategies, or share best practices with each other. It also allows them to learn from and connect with each other.

Teachers work closely with our Literacy Coach during our Coaching Rounds, as described later in our application. This experience tremendously supports our teachers' professional growth and helps them to build and grow a supportive learning team.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The positive partnerships that we have and continue to forge with our families and community members serve as a powerful ingredient for our students' success and our school's improvement. While we, like many schools, meet with families before the first day of school, what we have found most successful in supporting our students and working with our families is our Parent Intake Conferences. Held during the third week of school, these conferences afford teachers an opportunity to learn more about their students from the family's perspective and experiences. Families are able to share their child's past educational experiences, interests outside of school, apprehensions about school, and their goals for their child. The information gathered and bonds established during these conferences provide a foundation for a meaningful and strong connection that best supports the student's educational and social/emotional success for the upcoming school year.

Our school has the unique distinction of being located on the campus of the University of Hartford. Our strong partnership with University of Hartford affords our students, staff, and families a multitude of opportunities not experienced by most elementary schools. Our students reap the benefits of student teachers and field-work students in their classrooms, thus allowing them more focused and smaller group instruction. The student teachers and field-work students gain valuable experiences working with our students, enhancing their learning and development as future teachers. Music Education majors at Hartt School of Music instruct our students in Band and Strings lessons weekly. These lessons culminate with an impressive performance for community members, families, and UHMS staff. Our students also have the opportunity to participate in a dance group taught by the University of Hartford's Hartt School of Dance staff.

To further develop strong school-family relationships and the integration of the multiple intelligences, UHMS holds Multiple Intelligence nights. These events afford families an opportunity to participate in activities led by our Essentialists and connect with each other in a fun, laid-back atmosphere. Examples of these events are: Family Folk Dance, Visual-Spatial Make and Take, Family Sing, Family Fitness Night, and Family Fun Run. Families are also able to engage with their school community each Friday afternoon during our Friday Family Meeting. This weekly event brings together all kindergarten through grade five students, staff, and families to celebrate our students' learning. This community time allows two classes to present their learning through the lens of one or more of the Multiple Intelligences and all community members to sing and/or move together during our "All School Sing" or "All School Dance."

3. Professional Development:

The UHMS professional development plan is created each year based on school improvement initiatives that are identified by the staff. While the district's focus areas are determined with school-based leaders, each school personalizes their school-based plans using relevant data to guide decision-making. The administrators participate in monthly professional development that supports their skills of leading school improvement initiatives. This year's district focus on connectedness and instruction has informed and aligned with our school's professional development plan.

The district level professional development programs aim to address content that benefits all schools. We use these opportunities as a springboard for many of our school-based activities. Teacher's Choice is an

opportunity for teachers to identify and pursue learning experiences specifically tailored to the needs of their school and classroom. Through Teacher's Choice, teachers at UHMS have participated in book studies, action research projects, and curriculum development that have all directly evolved from problems of practice identified by staff. One of the book studies focused on equity and the role race plays in education. This group chose this topic as the impact of equity and race directly relates to the staff's ability to connect with families and create partnerships to increase student achievement.

Other building based professional development occurs during grade level and staff meetings. We believe in teacher leadership and learning from our colleagues. To promote this many of our staff members lead professional development activities. Our Literacy Coach supports reading and writing initiatives and our district Math Specialist supports classroom instruction and assessment in math. Additionally, to support our connectedness initiative we have had the opportunity to participate in Collaborative Problem Solving training provided by the district Students Affairs Coordinator. This powerful training focused on proactive communication with students and was initiated in response to an analysis of our behavioral data. Increasing our staff's ability to positively support our students in the classroom will have a direct impact on Tier I instruction and student achievement.

The most impactful form of professional development comes through our coaching cycles, detailed in a separate section of this application. Coaching Rounds directly impact and improve instruction, reflection, and collaboration. These rounds build professional support systems for our staff and reduce the isolation that is prevalent in many schools.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership of UHMS is devoted to meeting the individual needs of each student and their family. We are a school of choice and, therefore, work diligently to ensure that our students and families know that they are important and valued. It is our goal to know each student as a learner and person and work with our parents as partners.

We believe that the school belongs to our families and benefits our children best when we have open communication and a welcoming school environment. We believe that it is our responsibility to meet each student where they are and establish rigorous goals with them and their family. Our leadership team is committed to providing every resource available to meet the needs of our students because we expect miracles every day for our children. We are in classrooms daily, making connections with students and staff and observing instruction. We make decisions based on data and direct observation. We participate in professional development, grade level meetings, and intervention planning with our staff. We see our role as equal participants in determining how to positively impact the success of our students.

While administration is made up of a principal and assistant principal, we have empowered and embraced staff members in an extended leadership capacity. While decisions that require administrative oversight fall upon us, we seek to include the perspectives of others to ensure we do not make decisions in a vacuum. This has been particularly important in terms of how we address behavior. It is the mission of our team to see each student as an individual, taking into account what she or he brings in terms of environmental stressors. Because many of our students have experienced significant trauma, we have worked with staff to help them gain an understanding of its impact on children, their behavior, and their learning. This training provided strategies and resources to enhance relationships and address students' needs. We have also adopted restorative practices that have supported our students' development of problem solving and relationship building skills.

We are fully committed to providing an environment that welcomes and supports all students, prepares them to become critical thinkers, and provides them the skills to be engaged and active citizens.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The one practice that has had the most impact on Tier I instruction at UHMS is the implementation of coaching rounds. Coaching rounds are done annually with each grade level. Classroom teachers and the Literacy Coach work together over the course of four days, with each team member acting as the lead teacher for one day. Each day is comprised of a balance of teaching and planning time. A week prior to the coaching round, the team engages in an examination of classroom data to determine an area of focus. Once determined, the coach researches best practices for addressing the identified need and shares the plan and rationale with the team prior to the first day of instruction. On the first day, the Coach is the lead teacher in the classroom while the other teachers conduct a focused observation. The team reconvenes after the lesson to debrief. During the debrief, the lead teacher reflects on the effectiveness of the lesson and the team poses questions and shares their feedback. Based on the shared observations, the team then works collaboratively to map out the following day's lesson for the next lead teacher.

The benefits reaped from coaching rounds can be seen in changes in Tier I instruction, elevated confidence in teachers' instructional practices, a sharp increase in collegiality, and gains in student performance. Participating teachers frequently confide that they are inspired by something they observe in their colleague's classroom - a new management technique, different instructional strategies, or unique materials. Once these strengths are shared and observed, teachers report feeling more at ease exposing their vulnerabilities and seeking advice and support from one another throughout the school year. This renewed collegiality is most readily revealed during grade level planning, where teachers no longer hesitate to ask their teammates for ideas or support with their instruction. Prior to coaching rounds, teachers had very few opportunities to receive constructive criticism from their peers. While this practice can feel intimidating at first, teachers have come to value the positive impact it has on their instruction moving forward. Teachers leave coaching rounds with new strategies, a clear plan for their own professional development, and a newfound trust in their teammates.