

U.S. Department of Education
2018 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 Mrs. Julie Morris

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

Official School Name Lake Windward Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 11770 East Fox Ct

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

Alpharetta GA 30005-7800
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Fulton County

Telephone (770) 740-7050

Fax

Web site/URL

<http://school.fultonschools.org/es/la-kewindward/Pages/default.aspx>

E-mail morrisja@fultonschools.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. Jeff Rose

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail rosej@fultonschools.org

District Name Fulton County Tel. (470) 254-3600

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 Ms. Linda Bryant

(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 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):
- 59 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 19 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 18 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 96 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 | 13 | 1 | 14 |
| K | 67 | 57 | 124 |
| 1 | 59 | 68 | 127 |
| 2 | 64 | 45 | 109 |
| 3 | 59 | 58 | 117 |
| 4 | 69 | 60 | 129 |
| 5 | 70 | 55 | 125 |
| 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 | 401 | 344 | 745 |

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 35 % Asian
 - 11 % Black or African American
 - 9 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 43 % White
 - 2 % 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: 14%

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 | 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 | 43 |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)] | 98 |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016 | 691 |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4) | 0.14 |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100 | 14 |

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 14 %
101 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Afrikaans, Arabic, Bengali, Bengda, Bulgarian, Chinese, Farsi, Dari, Persian, Finnish, French, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Japanese, Kannada, Korean, Malayalam, Mandarin, Marathi, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Shona, Spanish, Tamil, Teluga/Telugu, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 7 %
Total number students who qualify: 49

8. Students receiving special education services: 19 %
139 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>42</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>11</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>25</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>24</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>20</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>3</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>11</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: 3
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. | 40 |
| Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc. | 19 |
| Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students. | 24 |
| Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc. | 14 |

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 19:1

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

| Required Information | 2016-2017 | 2015-2016 | 2014-2015 | 2013-2014 | 2012-2013 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Daily student attendance | 97% | 96% | 96% | 97% | 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.

To provide for the intellectual, social, emotional, creative, and physical growth of children. We promote the worth and dignity of all our children in a safe, nurturing environment while preparing each one to be a contributing citizen in a culturally diverse society.

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

Lake Windward Elementary School is a delightful neighborhood school tucked away from the hustle and bustle of busy streets in a suburb of northern Atlanta, Georgia called Alpharetta. The school is surrounded by a beautiful wooded campus which allows students and staff to enjoy seeing nature on a regular basis. It is not unusual to spot deer, squirrels, rabbits and birds from the windows of our classrooms. Beyond the wooded view are several neighborhoods from where many of our students walk to school.

Lake Windward Elementary (LWE) was built in 1989 and was one of the first schools in the area. Since then, the farmlands of Alpharetta have transformed into busy streets, businesses and neighborhoods. LWE prides itself on providing a warm, family-like culture where in 28 years there have only been four principals, and many teachers have spent their entire careers teaching here. Our students have historically performed above average while also being a “center school” for children with special needs. Over 15% of students enrolled at LWE are children with exceptionalities. In addition, it is a culturally diverse school which serves students from over 30 countries across the world.

In order to reach the wide range of learners that LWE is entrusted to educating, there are various programs offered for support. The school offers an Early Intervention Program for students in Kindergarten through Fifth Grade who struggle with basic reading and/or math. For our English Language Learners, we have opportunities for small group instruction in a pull-out setting as well as teachers who push-in to the general education classrooms to support students. LWE also has a Talented and Gifted Program which provides eligible students enrichment opportunities in a pull-out setting one day a week. Extended Learning Days are offered to some students after school for additional reading and/or math instruction.

LWE provides Kindergarten through Fifth Grade general education classes as well as a variety of special education classes. The school’s special education department includes two special needs Pre-Kindergarten classes, one special needs Kindergarten, three Moderate Intellectual Disability classes, four Autism classes as well as five Interrelated Resource teachers who provide co-teaching in the general education setting as well as pull-out instruction in a resource room. With this large population of children with special needs comes a lot of support staff, including four full time Speech and Language Therapists, two Occupational Therapists, and a Physical Therapist.

LWE places an emphasis on ensuring that students are taught how to think critically and are engaged in hands-on, student centered learning opportunities. Inquiry Based Learning is embedded throughout LWE’s STEM and Humanities blocks. Classes in grades 1-5 are departmentalized allowing most students to have one teacher who focuses on STEM (Math and Science) and one teacher who focuses on Humanities (Reading, ELA and Social Studies).

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are used as a structure for staff to address the needs of students. Staff regularly meet with grade level teams, vertical teams and departmentalized teams to review student data and plan for interventions, re-teaching and enrichment opportunities. Staff development and best practice sessions are also offered on an on-going basis to keep staff current on educational trends and research based strategies.

Students at LWE have the opportunity to participate in various optional activities offered at the school outside of school hours. Some of the offerings include: The Science Olympiad Club, Math Olympiad, Creative Writers' Club, Chess Club, Drama Classes, Dance Classes and a Robotics Club.

LWE is fortunate to have a lot of parent and community support. The school has a very engaged Parent Teacher Association (PTA) as well as a School Governance Council (SGC). The PTA is responsible for fundraising, planning family events at the school, and hosting celebrations for students and staff. The School Governance Council is a governing body which consists of parents, school staff, community members and the principal. The SGC meets regularly and is responsible for writing the school’s strategic plan and monitoring its implementation, approving the school’s budget and providing feedback to the principal in an effort to make decisions which positively impact the students at LWE. In addition, the school has a variety

of Business Partners. Business Partners provide resources for the school and host Spirit Nights where our families patronize their establishments as a way to show support for the business and school.

In an effort to continue a positive culture and climate, LWE rolled out Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS) in 2017. This program recognizes students for demonstrating respect, responsibility and safety by earning tickets which can be saved and traded in for rewards and prizes. LWE also has a character education program and recognizes students on a daily basis for exhibiting positive character traits. As our mantra states, LWE is a great place to “Learn and Grow, Lead and Show”!

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

As a public school in the state of Georgia, Lake Windward follows the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) as the core curriculum. In Fulton County, continuous achievement ensures that all students are appropriately challenged and instructed on a level that allows each child to progress at his/her individual pace. Through placement testing, students can accelerate their learning and pace faster once they have exhibited mastery of grade level standards in math and/or reading. As a result, Lake Windward classrooms reflect standards from multiple grade levels being instructed and applied at one time. In addition, a balanced assessment approach is used to determine students' mastery of standards across all content areas. This leads to creative scheduling and a heavy emphasis on flexible and fluid small group instruction. Additionally, departmentalization in grades 1st-5th allows teachers to become content experts of their standards.

The reading GSE are broken down into literary, informational, and reading foundational standards. Kindergarten through fifth grade teachers use a balanced literacy approach to implement the reading GSE. Phonics is an important component of the GSE reading foundational standards. Teachers in grades K-2 employ Orton-Gillingham strategies as one method to help students access the phonics standards. Differentiated phonics instruction is utilized during small group reading. A combination of modeled reading, shared reading, and guided reading are used to engage students in the learning and application of literary and informational standards across all grade levels. The Fountas and Pinnell Balanced Assessment System is used to determine students' instructional reading levels. This information is used to form flexible guided reading groups during which grade level reading standards, both phonics-based and comprehension, are applied on students' instructional reading levels. While students are working in a small group with their teacher, the remaining students are engaged in a variety of activities throughout the classroom to practice application of reading skills. Students in kindergarten and first grade participate in Daily 5 rotations to work on independent reading, word work, and writing. Second through fourth grade students engage in variations of choice boards which include activities that integrate social studies content as well as allow for application of reading skills. Fifth grade utilizes book clubs to foster conversations about reading.

The GSE writing standards focus on students obtaining the skills to work through the writing process to produce narrative, informational, and opinion pieces using correct language, usage, and conventions. The balanced literacy approach is used to help students master these standards through modeled writing, shared writing, and independent writing. The Lucy Calkins' writing units of study are used to help students acquire foundational writing standards in grades K-5. Write Score lessons are used to reinforce writing standards in grades 3-5.

In math, the GSE are broken down into counting and cardinality, numbers and operations, operations and algebraic thinking, measurement and data, and geometry. Similarly, to reading, math is taught using a workshop model. Concepts and skills are modeled during the mini-lesson. Flexible groups are pulled for guided math during which teachers remediate or extend the standards from the mini-lesson. A hands-on approach is often utilized to firm-up foundational skills to help move students from the concrete, to the representational, and then to the abstract. When students are not working with the teacher, they are independently applying skills. Many of the independent activities students engage in allow for application of the standards in a real-world context. The McGraw-Hill My Math paper and online resources are utilized to differentiate the math GSE and provide opportunities for students to apply their learning.

The social studies GSE in grades K-5 focus on historical, geographical, economic, and government/civic understandings. Humanities teachers in 2nd -5th grade focus heavily on integrating social studies into their reading and writing standards. Historical fiction novels that relate to the grade level's historical standards are often used during modeled and guided reading.

The science GSE are broken into earth and space, physical, and life science. Heavy emphasis is placed on the integration of the science and math standards in the STEM classrooms. A hands-on approach is taken to implement the science standards through experiments and opportunities for learning through exploration in

the STEM lab.

Though the core curriculum is framed by the Georgia Standards of Excellence, the Lake Windward faculty recognizes that a variety of resources and instructional strategies allow us to best meet the needs of our individual students.

Lake Windward does not offer a general education Pre-Kindergarten program. However, we do have two Pre-Kindergarten classes for three and four-year olds with special needs. The students in this program work toward their own individualized goals and objectives as indicated in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Students move on from special needs pre-kindergarten to various other special education classes depending on the specific needs of each student.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At Lake Windward E.S. there is a variety of curricula that is offered to the students where they gain essential skills and knowledge in additional content areas. All general education students, K-5, attend special area classes that include: physical education twice a week, along with art and music once a week. In these classes, student lessons are centered around the grade level standards in each content area. Students are pre-assessed on skills, provided differentiated instruction, and move forward with content when ready as evidenced by a variety of formal and informal assessments. The students in our special needs program have adaptive P.E., and art and music therapy twice a week. Students work on specific skills related to their IEP goals in each content area. When it is appropriate for the student, students with special needs attend general education special area classes.

Through creative scheduling, teachers K-5 are able to have a two hour and 45-minute collaborative planning block each month with their grade level team during a regular school day. During this time, students rotate through their Super Specials classes that consist of four extracurricular areas: guidance, health, STEM extension, and media/technology integration lessons. During their guidance time, the counselor emphasizes character education along with college and career lessons. In the health rotation, the PE teacher focuses on appropriate grade level lessons on safety, hygiene, nutrition, mental, emotional and social health. When students are in the STEM lab, the Curriculum Support Teachers (CSTs) guide students as they participate in hands-on inquiry-based lessons connected to their grade level Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE). While in the media/technology session, the Media Specialist provides lessons on internet safety, research skills and often works with the Education Technology Specialist to provide additional lessons.

In addition to the STEM super specials rotation, students regularly participate in rigorous and engaging activities addressing grade level GSE in our STEM lab. These activities are facilitated by classroom teachers along with the support of parent volunteers. During the year, outside businesses occasionally come into our STEM lab to provide additional STEM lessons; ex: Kimberly Clark. We also host a Family Science night that has about 20 professionals in numerous science-related fields facilitate hands-on activities for families to enjoy together.

Students in 4th and 5th grade have the option to participate in the chorus program. Led by the music teacher, students practice before school and into homeroom time once a week. Students have two performances a year at LW. They also participate in the cluster chorus concert which includes chorus groups from the feeder high school, middle school and other elementary schools in the feeder pattern.

The reading/language arts teachers in K-2 have attended Orton-Gillingham training and implement those reading strategies into their lessons and provide additional support for students who are struggling.

Special education students in the self-contained setting also participate in some extra-curricular activities. During the months of February and March, students in these classrooms practice for the Exceptional Children's Week performance. The students practice their performances during their adaptive music class and help make props in their adaptive art class. Fifth grade students who have been selected to be Special Friends, attend rehearsals and provide support to the students with special needs. Special education students enjoy participating in the Special Olympics which is held annually. Students who are able, compete in

bowling, gymnastics, bocce ball, and track and field events. The adaptive PE teacher works with the students during their PE time to help develop the skills necessary to participate.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Lake Windward is fortunate to serve students that come to school with a variety of academic needs. Some students come to school knowing grade level standards in advance. Other students are naturally school savvy and demonstrate that they need challenges after being introduced to curriculum concepts. The students that are introduced to the content, yet struggle on formative and summative assessments, need tiered supports and varied programming. Lake Windward is constantly analyzing data and aligning programming to meet the varied needs of all our students. We use a universal screener three times a year as well as a Benchmark Assessment System for reading diagnostics. This data, as well as aligned formative and summative assessment data, is analyzed by PLCs at monthly Data Team meetings to make sure extensions and supports are appropriate for each student. We have also prioritized the first thirty minutes of each school day as an enrichment, intervention, and re-teaching block. Support staff members as well as all grade level teachers work to support the specific needs of the students, based on data, during the intervention block.

We have two Talented and Gifted (TAG) teachers that work specifically with students that meet the eligibility criteria to participate in weekly TAG classes. The teachers expose the students to units that introduce the students to ways of thinking, researching, publishing, and presenting on topics unique to the TAG curriculum. Another way Lake Windward makes certain students are taught at their appropriate level is by implementing continuous achievement testing. Students are offered on-level courses, but if they meet specific diagnostic testing criteria, they are given assessments to potentially place them in advanced or accelerated courses for math and or reading/ELA. This ensures that the students are instructed at their demonstrated ability level in those core subjects.

Lake Windward also provides a wide variety of systems and supports for the students that need more time or different ways to master the curriculum. We have both full time and part time Early Intervention Program teachers that work with students who show they need more reading support. The teachers use a variety of ways to meet the students' needs, infusing Orton-Gillingham phonics instruction into their daily lessons as well as the use of Leveled Literacy Intervention Kits. We have also trained many of our kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers on the Orton-Gillingham strategies, so they've been able to infuse those strategies into their general reading instruction. As a result of continual data analysis, we have hired a reading support teacher that works with students in first and third grades who we've identified as needing additional targeted reading instruction. We offer extended learning opportunities for students in grade three for reading and or math who have shown through assessments and classwork that they need that additional instruction. Lake Windward also has a tiered and structured Student Support Team that works collaboratively with grade level teachers and the parents of the students that are at risk of not meeting grade level standards. Through the SST process, the students' academic or behavioral needs are determined, targeted, research-based interventions are selected, and consistent progress monitoring and follow up is scheduled.

As part of general lesson design and instruction, grade level teachers employ a variety of teaching strategies and methods. Recently, Lake Windward defined three personalized learning strategies that have been implemented throughout the grade levels. Teachers focus on adding student Choice and Voice to their units where students have the opportunity to select various options for accessing the curriculum as well as showcasing their knowledge. Teachers also utilize Varied Strategies, so students have multiple ways to receive the curriculum as well as Just-in-Time Direct Instruction which allows for students to have timely feedback aligned to their academic needs for each unit. Grade levels have access to laptop carts and two computer labs that allow the teachers to design integrated lessons and units with the flexibility of technology for previewing material, flipped instruction, and review stations. Teachers also have access to a large leveled library that is full of texts at specific reading levels so teachers can tailor their small group reading instruction. Mystery Science is a program that teachers utilize to provide unique science experiences and lab lessons. Lake Windward students are also exposed to Problem Based Learning opportunities in their classes as well as in art, music, and PE.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Lake Windward Elementary positively engages and motivates our students in multiple ways. We have implemented the Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS). On a daily basis, students have opportunities to earn rewards, Gator Gold, for being respectful, responsible, and safe. Students are also recognized for perfect attendance each quarter. Furthermore, students are acknowledged through our Character Education program. Each month, a different character trait is highlighted, and teachers recognize students in their class for exhibiting that attribute.

Lake Windward offers several opportunities for students to enhance their leadership skills. An opportunity that is offered to our 4th and 5th graders is peer mentorship. This is a leadership role in which students work in classrooms with select K-2 students to provide assistance with reading and math. Peer mentors may be asked to read, review sight words, practice math facts, play reading or math games, or provide additional support to their mentees. This type of assistance is invaluable to teachers and students. In addition, Lake Windward helps students become more engaged and involved in their own learning success by helping them set individual goals in academic areas and develop a plan to achieve those goals. Students collect their own data and analyze their progress. This helps students become more engaged and involved in their own learning success.

Lake Windward is a “center based” school for children with special needs, including moderate, severe, and profound intellectual disabilities, and autism. Therefore, we have designed a Special Friends program to which our 5th graders can apply. This program promotes tolerance and acceptance of individual differences and special needs. It allows typical students to work closely with our special needs teachers and students by assisting in classrooms and throughout their day. Students go through an application process to apply for this leadership role.

In addition to supporting our students, Lake Windward Elementary creates an environment for staff where they feel valued and supported, both professionally and personally. A beginning of the year kick-off event takes place for staff to celebrate the start of a new school year. The administration has an open-door policy that allows staff to feel comfortable providing feedback, asking questions, and/or expressing concerns that allow the school to identify opportunities for continued growth. In the front office area, there is a Gator Gratitude board where staff can recognize each other as a means to promote employee appreciation. During monthly staff meetings, administration recognizes one staff member who demonstrates skills above and beyond expectations. Throughout the year, Lake Windward provides opportunities for fun staff gatherings inside and outside of school to foster and encourage camaraderie, connection, and a sense of family among colleagues.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Lake Windward has historically had a strong connection between home and school. Teachers and families alike understand the importance of working tightly together to nurture the whole child. We have a very informed and involved Parent Teacher Association that works closely with school administration to align programming and supports to the school’s strategic plan. Another separate entity that consists of elected and appointed teachers, parents, and community members is the Lake Windward School Governance Council (SGC). The SGC creates the school strategic plan that is aligned to Fulton County strategic initiatives. The SGC discusses and approves programming that supports the plan.

Lake Windward maintains a website that is designed to keep families informed about various events, grade level links, staff information, SGC meetings, and other important information. From the Lake Windward site, families are also able to access grade level websites that provide another level of school to home communication. The school newsletter, the Gator Gazette, is also updated and posted to the school website.

Teachers have embraced educational applications and platforms, like SeeSaw, FlipGrid, Padlet, Edmodo, Twitter, among others that allow the teachers and students to communicate specifically about what's taking place in the classroom. Families can access the secure applications and watch their students explain how they solved a math word problem, or what their hypothesis was prior to starting an experiment in the STEM Lab. Parents can be more deeply connected to their student's learning, providing them opportunities to extend the learning at home.

The PTA also recognizes the value of offering programs to families so they can be connected to the school in unique and family focused ways. Super Saturday is a large, whole school event put on by the PTA to bring families to the school on a Saturday to engage in fun games and events. International Night provides a chance for families to showcase their heritage through displays, sharing food, facts, and even dances. Dads and Daughters can participate in a Father Daughter Dance in February and moms and sons have a blast at the Mother Son Game Night in March as well as other Family Fun nights. As a service to the school grounds, the PTA and other service organizations come together for a Hands-On Lake Windward event that focuses on campus upkeep and beautification. In the spring, Lake Windward staff puts together a Volunteer Tea to show appreciation for the continued support of the volunteers that worked to help the school throughout the year. We also are fortunate to have a large number of local business partners that support Lake Windward.

3. Professional Development:

One of Lake Windward's greatest strengths is its cyclical and targeted approach to staff professional development (PD). Being a historically high performing school, one of our teachers' greatest challenges is continuing to grow students. Every summer the school administrators and professional learning facilitator review data from the previous school year to inform the upcoming year's PD plan. This data consists of state testing results, teacher observation data, and staff surveys. Administration makes a conscientious effort to integrate school, district, and state initiatives into one plan to ensure that the professional learning is relevant, related, and presented in a manner that is not overwhelming. Through a consistent PD focus on rigorous instructional strategies and higher order thinking, Lake Windward's teachers continue to reflect upon and refine their instructional strategies and the effectiveness is evident through student's growth across all academic areas.

Teachers meet monthly for staff PD meetings and vertical teams. During these meetings, general education teachers and self-contained teachers receive differentiated PD to enhance their instructional practices. Professional development is also differentiated through choice, with opportunities for teachers to choose sessions aligned to their professional goals. Vertical teams are split into humanities and STEM as Lake Windward is departmentalized from first through fifth grade. During vertical teams, teachers receive PD related to the content areas they teach which helps to ensure vertical alignment across the school. Administrators are constant fixtures in all PD settings to ensure that they stay abreast of the most current and effective instructional practices and strategies.

For the past two years, Lake Windward has had four full release days during which staff receive full days of PD. These days are formatted in a manner that allows for gradual release of new instructional strategies. Teachers are exposed to, engaged in, and are given time to plan for implementation of strategies within their classrooms. These strategies are revisited during future PD sessions, allowing teachers to reflect on the effectiveness of the strategies, share their experiences vertically, and brainstorm how to further grow students through the use of the strategies.

Professional development is led heavily by teacher leaders, though professional facilitators and administrators also support this work. Lake Windward has contracted an educational consultant for the past two years to help begin the school's journey towards inquiry-based learning. The positive effects of related work on student questioning, wondering to bolster engagement, and effective inquiry strategies can be seen when walking into any classroom across the school.

With a continued and consistent focus on PD, Lake Windward's students have made great gains as teachers

continue to refine their instructional practices. The emphasis on higher order thinking, rigor, and inquiry has helped our students continue to grow as learners as evident by student engagement and performance.

4. School Leadership:

Lake Windward Elementary School has a highly effective administrative team which includes a principal, assistant principal, STEM Curriculum Support Teacher, Humanities Curriculum Support Teacher, School Counselor, and Instructional Support Teacher. The school principal has set the tone for a highly collaborative learning environment where school administrators have an open-door policy and remain actively engaged in the day-to-day instruction and happenings around the school. The administrative team meets once a week to discuss instructional programs, school wide student data, and classroom observations. The team is in constant communication with stakeholders regarding the expectations of curriculum and instruction. The administrative team members are in classrooms weekly to monitor the quality of instruction and the progress of our learners.

The principal has the expectation that students are provided a student centered, hands on learning environment where students are appropriately challenged and supported with the utmost care. The principal is the lead learner and promotes current best practices through monthly professional development sessions and weekly classroom observations and feedback. The Assistant Principal supports these initiatives by being in charge of scheduling, state and national assessments, student conduct, safety, facilities, and staff evaluations. The two Curriculum Support Teachers play a vital role in ensuring that resources and training are provided to all teachers in all content areas. They regularly observe in classrooms and coach teachers regarding best practices. In addition, they closely monitor struggling students and oversee the implementation of the Response to Interventions (RTI). The School Counselor looks out for the academic, social, and emotional health of our students and staff. She provides monthly lessons to each class on every grade level to focus on developmentally appropriate social and emotional topics as well as study skills training and test taking skills. She regularly meets with individuals and small groups of students who need additional support in one of the above areas. The Instructional Support Teacher oversees the special education department and provides support to teachers regarding resources needed to teach students with exceptionalities and monitors compliance expectations.

The school's leadership team is comprised of grade level chairpersons as well as the administrative team. Monthly leadership meetings are held afterschool hours where members review school data and share best practices. Leadership capacity is built by offering numerous opportunities for teachers to become leaders in areas of interest such as: STEM Vertical Team Leader, Humanities Vertical Team Leader, PBIS Team Leader, Personalized Learning Team and Technology team. The administrative team is constantly reflecting on their work and reassigning roles and responsibilities to leverage team members' strengths. The team ensures "what's best for students" is at the center of every decision.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Over the last five years, there has been a specific focus on increasing the level of rigor in the instruction and assignments at Lake Windward ES. Teachers have transitioned from previously using worksheets and textbooks for assignments to a much more hands-on, relevant style of learning. This educational shift has happened in small chunks over time.

About five years ago, professional development for teachers on Depth of Knowledge and Blooms Taxonomy was started. Once teachers had a solid background and understanding of the basics behind “rigor”, the focus then turned to helping teachers develop their questioning skills. Teachers were given training on how to write questions for their lessons which are open ended and thought provoking. Eventually students were included in this training as well so that they could also learn to ask higher level thinking questions. There has been an emphasis on the importance of inquiry and wonder. Throughout our classrooms, there are “Wonder Walls” where students use post-it notes to ask questions about things they are curious. Students can research the answers to their wonders, or students have the opportunity to answer the wonders of others and share their responses. Staff professional development has continued with an educational consultant who comes in to help teachers and administrators deepen their knowledge of how to write plans for activities and projects which require critical thinking. Inquiry-based learning strategies have been taught and applied. Teachers get regular feedback from the educational consultant and administrators in order to celebrate what is working well and receive strategies to strengthen areas of growth. All teachers have been provided a copy of *The Strategic Teacher* and *Comprehension and Collaboration* books as these texts have been instrumental in our teachers’ professional development.

Now, when walking into LWE classrooms, students are no longer just compliant learners filling out worksheets. They are active learners making connections to the relevance of their learning and applying critical thinking skills in a variety of settings. The STEM lab is often in use by teachers facilitating meaningful investigations and experiments. This approach to engaging students in higher order thinking is woven through all content areas including art, music and physical education. All teachers have learned the importance of preparing our students to be problem solvers and thinkers. Due to the investment and focus on increasing the rigor in our classrooms, our students’ achievement scores have risen on State and National assessments. In addition, more students are scoring at the “Distinguished” level on State tests. Students in all subgroup areas are performing above the district and state as well. The expectation of high levels of learning for all students is evident throughout every classroom at LWE.