

U.S. Department of Education
2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [X] Title I [] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Ms. Tammy Becker

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

Official School Name Hillcrest Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1045 Hilltop Drive

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

<u>Lawrence</u>	<u>KS</u>	<u>66044-4599</u>
City	State	Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Douglas County

Telephone (785) 832-5720

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Web site/URL <https://www.usd497.org/Domain/11> E-mail tbecker@usd497.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. Anna Stubblefield

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail astubble@usd497.org

District Name Lawrence Tel. (785) 832-5000

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

_____ Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
 President/Chairperson Mrs. Shannon Kimball

(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):
- 14 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 4 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 20 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	0	0	0
K	23	23	46
1	21	28	49
2	33	26	59
3	24	22	46
4	15	29	44
5	34	28	62
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	150	156	306

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 3 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 14 % Asian
 - 6 % Black or African American
 - 29 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 42 % White
 - 6 % 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: 12%

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	32
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	7
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	39
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	332
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.12
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	12

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 57 %
173 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Akan, Arabic, Bulgarian, Burmese, Chinese, Cree, English, Farsi, French, Gujarati, Hawaiian, Hindi, Indian, Japanese, Kurdish, Laotian, Mandarin, Other Native American, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Thai, Twi, Urdu

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 60 %
Total number students who qualify: 184

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %
32 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>1</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>3</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>7</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>8</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>4</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>2</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 17
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.	15
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.	6
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 22:1

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%	96%	96%	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.

Hillcrest is a community working together to provide a challenging, meaningful education for all children, in a safe and stimulating environment where diversity is welcomed and learning is celebrated.

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

Hillcrest Elementary School is a dynamic, inclusive academic community providing a challenging, meaningful education for all children in a safe, stimulating environment that welcomes diversity and celebrates learning. Built in 1953 in Lawrence, Kansas, Hillcrest houses approximately 315 students in grades K-5. In 2015, an \$8 million expansion and remodeling project provided state-of-the-art spaces that allow efficient integration of technology and flexible spaces to facilitate all students' unique learning styles.

Hillcrest's commitment to providing inclusive experiences for all its students also extends to the grounds outside the building. The Ryan Gray Playground for All Children, built in 1994 to celebrate the life of a wheelchair-bound Hillcrest student who earlier had died of a brain tumor, serves as a model for promoting children of all abilities to play together. Upgraded in 2016 with public and private funds, the playground features: wheelchair-accessible ramps; signs in multiple languages, and equipment that accommodates children with a wide range of needs and abilities. When school is not in session, the Ryan Gray Playground is open to families from around the community.

Perhaps the most unique and highly prized of Hillcrest's features is described by the school motto, "Where the World Goes to School." Lawrence is home to the University of Kansas, which attracts scholars and families from all over the world. Children university families and from a diverse and vibrant immigrant population give Hillcrest its rich, international flavor. In the 2017-18 academic year, 57% of Hillcrest's students identified English as their second language. Twenty countries and 26 languages are represented in the Hillcrest population. To welcome and emphasize students' cultural and linguistic diversity, a wall-sized map labeled "Where the World Goes to School" greets students, staff, and visitors. Magnets mark the countries that Hillcrest students are from, and the cafeteria is decorated with flags from students' home countries. Many classroom items are labeled in students' native languages. Instead of traditional holiday parties, grade-level teams implement age-appropriate celebrations that combine curriculum standards and the diverse cultural practices of Hillcrest students. Students understand that their heritage is valued and learning about each other's background is a priority for all staff members.

For years, Hillcrest was the only Lawrence elementary school to provide services to both English Language Learners (ELLs) and to students with multiple physical disabilities. When the district decided to expand English as a Second Language (ESL) services to other elementary schools, Hillcrest served as the model and offered support and guidance to other teachers and staff.

During this academic year, 60% of Hillcrest's students are eligible to receive free or reduced priced meals. Due to socio-economic factors, many students are unable to participate in extra-curricular activities outside of school. In response, Hillcrest staff began sponsoring extra-curricular activities on Wednesday afternoons for all students. The staff wanted to provide all students with opportunities to explore and experience skills, hobbies, and interests at no cost. Students have been able to choose from a selection of over 20 different activities, including robotics, dance, cooking, sewing, board games, basketball, embryology, and loom bracelets.

As part of Hillcrest's commitment to provide the highest level of professional development for its staff, the school participated in the national Reading First initiative as well as in extensive, ongoing equity training with an emphasis on eliminating racial bias in our school. All teachers are trained in Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures, which are used in the general classrooms as well as during intervention groups. The building has determined 13 structures that are used in every classroom for continuity throughout the school and from year to year. Project-Based Learning (PBL) is used in our classrooms to enhance core content subjects. Last year, teachers and support staff attended four days of training to learn how to implement PBL principles. This year, each grade level was committed to developing and implementing at least three PBL projects during the year. PBL provides extended opportunities for students to not only develop cognitive but interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Staff members receive systematic, continued support from learning coaches to ensure that they provide the best support for all students.

In recent years, when USD 497 partnered with the University of Kansas to create a Comprehensive,

Integrated, Three-Tiered (CI3T) Model of Prevention, a multi-tiered support system for students' academic, behavioral, and emotional needs, Hillcrest was one of the first schools in the district to help plan, design, and implement the plan. Last summer, a team of staff members attended a conference on trauma-informed care, and the entire staff participated in a trauma-informed-care book study this school year. Staff members have become committed to expanding their knowledge and to developing safe classroom spaces to support all students.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

At Hillcrest Elementary, all instruction is aligned with Kansas Common Core Standards (KCCS) to provide rigorous, personalized learning instruction ensuring that all students achieve and succeed. Lessons are differentiated to provide individualized instruction, and teachers employ interdisciplinary teaching strategies in their daily lessons. Early in September, grade level teachers and support staff meet to review assessment data and identify standards that need to be highlighted during the year. During weekly collaboration time, teachers discuss student needs and design lessons that are scaffolded for student success. Through this approach we have increased student achievement across all grades and continue to close achievement gaps for our students. Throughout the year, data reviews continue to determine support groups and to incorporate Title, ESL, and special education (SPED) teachers in helping plan instruction. This ensures that each student's needs are met using the highest quality instruction.

Hillcrest educators recognize students' individual learning needs as well as cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Through a balanced literacy approach, teachers integrate instruction with authentic reading and writing experiences so that students learn how to use literacy strategies as they apply their learning. They modify learning experiences through class observations, students' progress, and assessment results. Ongoing assessments provide an instructional base in phonemic awareness, reading fluency, phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension skills.

Teachers use the Reading Street program to support their reading instruction. Reading is taught in a 120-minute reading block that includes whole-group skill lessons and small-group guided reading at appropriate instructional levels. During independent literacy stations students expand their knowledge using an inquiry based approach around Science and Social Studies topics that address the Kansas Common Core Standards.

Writing instruction is taught for 45 minutes three days a week using Lucy Calkins' Units of Study. The program supports explicit instruction in opinion/argument, information, and narrative writing and provides rich opportunities for practice and presentation. For those English Language Learners who need a more focused approach to the language domains of listening, speaking, and writing, interventionists use the Writing A-Z program. Writing A-Z provides students opportunities for both shared and independent writing, with an emphasis on use of visuals and graphic organizers.

The Common Core Math Expressions program from Houghton-Mifflin is core resource used to teach mathematics. Whole- and small-group lessons comprise the 90-minute math block. Instruction is informed based on student need using common district assessments as well as unit pre-tests. Teachers utilize explicit instruction which is broken into very specific components, including review, fluency practice, Number Talks, problem solving and real-world application. We provide students with math instruction that incorporates conceptual, procedural and application level lessons in order to meet all aspects of rigor using the KCCS mathematical practices. Students learn math concepts using manipulatives and a hands-on approach, which builds students' conceptual understanding of foundational math concepts.

To meet the Next Generation Science Standards, Hillcrest uses a variety of science materials to broaden students' academic experience. Hillcrest currently supplements science work with the Mystery Science program, which will be adopted at the district level this spring. This program includes inquiry-based lessons that integrate reading and writing with hands-on work. These cross-curricular lessons allow students to collaborate and delve deeper into the standards to apply and understand science concepts.

In addition to the standards-based curriculum, Hillcrest students receive time each week for integrated Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) work in the classroom. Students use this time to develop critical-thinking skills as they study real-world issues, conduct hands-on exploration, and collaborate with their peers.

The social studies curriculum is based on Kansas Standards for History, Government and Social Studies.

These standards prepare students to be informed, thoughtful, engaged citizens as they enrich their communities, state, nations, world and themselves. Staff work in grade level teams to plan project based learning units that integrate the defined state standards with other content standards to give our students real-world experiences.

Hillcrest joined the Junior Achievement program to help students deepen their understanding of the world around them. In addition, a large portion of Hillcrest's social studies curriculum is based on extending the district's equity work. Hillcrest staff members meet regularly to discuss race, to learn about equity issues in education, and to plan an equitable curriculum for all students. Students are provided with time to discuss contemporary issues at a deep level and to offer multiple perspectives on world events and culture.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Hillcrest addresses Art, Music, and Physical Education through forty-five minute classes on a three-day rotation. Library/Media classes are scheduled weekly. Art, Music, and Physical Education are conducted in spaces designated for that purpose, and library classes take place in the general-education classrooms. Each year, these specialists offer a "Specials Night" for K-1 families. This allows teachers to introduce the curriculum for each area and to show parents a snippet of the classes.

Art

Through Visual Arts Education, students learn the meaning and value of creativity and innovation by demonstrating originality and inventiveness in work and being open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives. They learn to develop, implement and communicate new ideas to others. During art classes, students in each grade level focus on an artist and on overarching themes that influence his or her art. Young artists work with various mediums to create their own portfolios, which are showcased on a public website.

Music

Music is core to academic growth and central to the education of every student. Music education is an essential, vibrant part of life. Learning, performing, creating and appreciating music brings meaning and richness to our heritage and culture. Music education facilitates learning in other subjects and enhances skills that children inevitably use in all areas of life.

The Quaver curriculum is used as a resource to support student learning at school and as a way for all students to access interactive musical activities at home. Throughout their years at Hillcrest, students learn to play different types of percussion instruments, recorders, and ukuleles. Through annual grade level concerts, students embrace their learning and showcase their talent with enthusiasm and joy!

Physical Education

Research has shown that planned, sequential instruction in physical education promotes lifelong physical activity. Our comprehensive physical education (PE) program is designed to develop basic movement skills, sports skills, and physical fitness as well as to enhance mental, social, and emotional activities. Addressing the need for students to become more active in their daily lives, physical education teachers look for a variety of avenues to pique student interest and promote lifelong skills. A recent grant paid for a fleet of 30 mountain bikes to educate our intermediate students in the fundamentals of riding a bike and bicycle safety. The fleet rotates through the district, and lessons are taught to support PE standards. As a part of assessing students' physical health, the K-Fit assessment is given regularly, and Fitness Grams are sent home with 4th- and 5th-grade students to share their progress with parents.

Wellness and Nutrition

An emphasis on Wellness and Nutrition is an essential component of the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation framework of Responsive Culture. In order to promote a health-conscious environment, Hillcrest's grounds include a garden with a raised bed for each class. The school's garden coordinator is a classroom teacher who works with the district's outdoor education coordinator to assist teachers with lessons and garden activities. The garden program is enhanced by the Farm to School Program, sponsored by the Kansas Health Foundation. As part of this program, students are often served locally produced food grown from nearby farms and gardens. Field trips and activities are planned in coordination with Farm to

School. Third-grade students participate in a cooking class using locally produced foods, and fourth graders attend the Slice of Agriculture program presented by Douglas County Extension Services.

The Building Wellness Team plans two days annually to help students learn about healthy practices and participate in wellness activities, such as yoga and cardio workouts. Activities throughout the year also help staff members model healthy lifestyles for students. Hillcrest's health and wellness initiatives recently earned the school a HealthierUS Bronze School distinction.

Technology/Library/Media

For the past several years, Hillcrest has led technology integration and personalized learning in USD 497. During library lessons, students learn research and technology skills, including digital citizenship, coding, and video production. These weekly lessons provide instruction that challenges our students to move from enhancement to transformation on the SAMR Model.

Each classroom has 15 or more computers and iPads in addition to SMART projectors and larger-screen collaboration stations. The Library Media Center provides Kindles and iPads for students to use as e-readers to access the library's digital resources. The library also has a designated Maker Space and learning area, spaces for students to work individually or in groups and sections for Braille and foreign-language books.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Hillcrest diligently supports the whole child through a variety of instructional approaches, interventions, and assessments that address the academic, behavioral and social/emotional needs. Learning outcomes are written in student terms and regularly shared. Students clearly know why they are being asked to do a certain task and what concept is being illuminated. Assessment is used to determine that students have achieved the instructional outcomes established. Assessments are also used to provide teachers and their students with valuable information to guide future learning.

Differentiated instruction, explicit instruction, pre-teaching, project based learning, small- and whole-group instruction focus support for each student. Content objectives must be posted and shared for each lesson.

Intervention groups meet at least four times a week in general-education classrooms or in learning pockets around the building. This set-up for intervention groups allows for sheltered instruction in an environment focused on the learner's needs. Visual instruction plans are implemented in all content areas as needed.

Teachers use assessment data that drive daily interventions in reading, math, and writing. With Hillcrest's ESL-certified staff, many interventions use research-based ESL strategies to support the language needs of our diverse population. Each grade level has Title I, ESL, and SPED support, and the tier-two resource room is stocked with resources such as specialized ESL materials, Leveled Literacy Intervention books, and phonics materials. Students with a Student Support Plan or Individualized Education Program receive interventions tailored to their goals. General-education teachers collaborate with interventionists to monitor student's specific needs and interventions are evaluated and modified at student support meetings which are held during each trimester. In-depth reviews are held twice a year to analyze district assessments and reorganize supports as necessary.

Formative and summative assessments help pinpoint the needs of each student, and teachers triangulate data from three points, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), Aimsweb, and classroom assessments, to decide how to plan interventions. All core instructors and interventionists can access data from an electronic document that provides building, district, and state academic data; social/emotional data; assessment accommodations/modifications; language scores; assessment results from previous years; and other pertinent information.

Key reading concepts are monitored weekly with assessments from Reading Street and Fresh Reads. Pre- and post- assessments are used in math to create intervention groups, focus on needed skills, and challenge students who already are proficient with each unit's skills and concepts.

If teachers need more data on a student, the Quick Phonics Screener, Phonological Awareness Skills Test, and Words Their Way assessments are used to pinpoint missing reading skills. These assessments help interventionists focus lessons to eliminate gaps in a student's knowledge base.

The Student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS-IE) screener identifies students who are at risk for externalizing and internalizing problem behaviors. This data, coupled with office referrals, helps support students whose behaviors interfere with their learning by informing counselors, teachers, and others of their social/emotional needs.

Guided by data, teachers at each grade level pick six to eight focus students, their lowest performing students or those with the most social/emotional needs. These students receive intensive support, a responsive adult who builds an extended relationship and student-support plans that track their progress toward academic, behavior, and/or social/emotional goals. Focus students are discussed at each grade level's student-support meeting.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At Hillcrest, the principal, staff, and students are committed to creating an environment of belonging and acceptance for all students. Hillcrest Hawk values are the core of our everyday practices. Our values are Have Respect, Act Responsibly, Work Together, Kindness Counts and Soar to Success. The Hillcrest Hawks and their mascot, Howie Hawk, celebrate school pride every day.

To further support students, Hillcrest adopted a school-wide CI3T Model of Prevention which includes a Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) component. Staff members give students HAWK tickets, in addition to behavior specific praise, to reinforce positive behavior and school-wide values. Each month, students can visit the HAWKS nest store, which is run by student council members, to redeem tickets to purchase items for themselves or for the local humane society or homeless shelter. Four times a year, students can spend their tickets during school-wide celebrations.

The staff is committed to developing positive relationships with students and one another. The principal knows each child by name. Classroom and resource teachers greet students outside classroom doors each morning, participate in daily class meetings, and manage extracurricular clubs. In our building, there is a self-care room for staff to use when needing a break from the daily stressors of our job. We believe that staff must be their “best self” in order to support their students’ needs.

Staff members are supported by the principal, the Parent-Teacher Organization, the Wellness Committee, and the Social Committee through a variety of activities in- and outside-of-school.

Hillcrest values the feedback parents give on an annual Parent/Community Survey. During the past five years, the percentage of our parents who feel Hillcrest is welcoming to parents and the public has gone from 94.9% to 98.2%. Last spring, 98% of our parents reported that Hillcrest is welcoming to parents, regardless of background. Of the 111 surveys returned last spring, 97% felt the principal has a sense of our parents and community, and 98% felt our staff welcomes opportunities to interact with parents. When surveyed, 98.55% of our staff said they have a positive attitude about our school and thought they could make a positive difference for students.

The following message was recently posted on our staff Shout Out board: “I am a substitute teacher, so I have been in a LOT of schools. You have created a great school climate: The students here are quiet, respectful and are here to learn. Keep up the GREAT work!”

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Our families are a major component of Hillcrest’s success, and parent communication and academic support are top priorities for the school community. Since 2010, classroom teachers have conducted Early Visits during the first weeks of each school year to help parents and teachers to get to know each other, to share information about students, and to set goals for the year. These visits ensure that parents and teachers can work as a team to help children succeed. Translators are provided for ESL parents who would like them.

School information is available to parents either in paper or electronic form and is distributed in multiple languages. Classroom and school-wide newsletters are sent home regularly, and parents have access to SeeSaw, an app that provides continuous feedback about students’ academic and behavioral performance. Parent-Teacher conferences are held twice a year, and translators are provided if needed. Children receiving intervention services take home book bags and materials to be used outside of home and to support parents in helping their children succeed. For the past several years, Hillcrest has employed a Parent Involvement Facilitator who calls and visits homes to help connect parents to organizations, supports and events in the community.

To help build positive home-school relationships, families are invited to annual reading, math, and science nights. As part of our equity work, this year we started Latino/ Hispanic family nights to continue to build our partnerships for academic success. Hillcrest partners with local businesses and the community to bring programs into the school such as BIGS in Blue, Douglas County free dental clinics, AmeriCorps volunteers, Harvester BackSnacks, Safe Routes to Schools, Farm2School, and wellness days. Grade level are committed to bringing in community partners to provide real world experts as part of PBL.

Parents are invited to participate in their child's annual Hawk of the Day, where the student brings special items from home to display in cases in the hall and share with their classmates. Students are encouraged to bring something that represents their family, piece of their art work, and things they have written. The Hillcrest PTO hosts annual events such as a watermelon feed, pancake breakfast, movie nights, book sales, and a school carnival. One of each year's most popular events is the International Potluck, where families bring their culture's traditional foods and set up to displays to share with attendees.

3. Professional Development:

Hillcrest has a reputation for being at the forefront of implementing innovative instructional strategies. Teachers seek professional-learning opportunities that spark passion for teaching, hone pedagogy, and promote academic achievement and positive emotional development for all students. Through professional development, Hillcrest teachers have chosen to explore social-emotional issues through equity work and trauma-informed care, delve into blended and personalized learning, design and execute a school-wide positive behavior program, incorporate Sheltered Instruction for English Language Learners, gain knowledge of new literacy programs, study STEM/STEAM instruction, and discover new digital technologies to enhance learning and communication with parents.

Each year, the Building Leadership Team develops a master schedule for professional development based on the School Improvement Plan, which follows the district's three focus areas of excellence, equity, and engagement. Each week teachers spend at least 90 minutes in all-staff collaboration, which consists of both teacher-led professional development and grade-level sharing to enhance best teaching practices. Twice a year, teachers collaborate during an all-day grade-level Professional Learning Community (PLC) session to put into practice what they've learned through collaborative lesson planning. A commitment to professional learning continues in the summer as teachers pursue district learning opportunities or grade-level PLC planning.

In the past two years, classroom teachers and several resource staff attended professional-development training about Project-Based Learning, which was facilitated using Buck Institute principles. All staff also attend Beyond Diversity training through the Pacific Education Group, a testament to Hillcrest's commitment to address school-based equity issues. At the building level, Equity Committee members engaged in two book studies titled, "Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain," and "How to Teach Students that Don't Look Like You," and shared their learning with the rest of the staff. In the 2017-18 school year, the entire staff participated in a book study of "Fostering Resilient Learners: Strategies for Creating a Trauma-Sensitive Classroom."

To best meet the needs of their diverse population, Hillcrest teachers are required to add an English as a Second Language (ESL) endorsement to their Kansas teaching licenses. In 2002, teachers began a school-wide, two-year certification program offered by Kansas State University. Each teacher earned 15 graduate-credit hours as they deepened their knowledge of language learning and instructional strategies to better support ELLs.

To keep teachers engaged in their own learning, they choose sessions they want to attend from a variety of offerings during yearly teacher-led professional-development days. Newly hired teachers are supported by experienced teacher mentors, and all teachers have access to a building learning coach who helps with research ideas or instructional strategies.

4. School Leadership:

Leadership is an activity, not a position. Leadership is a practice and it requires mobilizing others to do difficult work. The involvement and voice of staff, students, and parents in every aspect of school life contributes to Hillcrest's unique form of leadership. With high expectations and support, Hillcrest has built a leadership philosophy around data-driven decisions, equity, and collaboration among all stakeholders. The principal leads a team of teachers representing all PLCs to provide resources and special opportunities to constantly improve their skills. Time is devoted weekly to focus the school's purpose and vision and to ensure that all cultures are respectfully represented.

All staff members are encouraged to assume leadership roles. Staff meetings often are staff-led. Each certified staff member serves on either the Wellness and Social committee, Lawrence Education Achievement Partners, Equity Team, Ci3T Leadership Team and Building Leadership Team, or the Mental Health Team. Several Hillcrest teachers have taken on leadership roles on district-level committees. Over the last 5-6 years, several teachers from Hillcrest have moved into full time positions at the district level which is a testament to their skills and leadership abilities. The Hillcrest Building Leadership and Ci3T teams collaborate to develop and implement the School Improvement Plan, the Ci3T manual, and to support individual student learning.

Hillcrest's principal sets the tone for positive and effective communication by keeping the staff informed of district updates, issues, and visions. She serves as a liaison between district, building, and parents. She not only knows every child's name, but also prides herself on knowing each student's family history, personality, and academic history. Her focused support of everyone involved with the school sets the tone and models what it means to be part of the Hillcrest community.

Staff help plan and implement special events in collaboration with the Parent Teacher Organization and also serve on the school's Site Council. A Hispanic Family night recently was hosted in collaboration with the Parent Involvement Coordinator and the principal to help meet the needs of Hispanic students and their families. From that activity, a parent advisory group was formed to plan educational activities at least three times a year.

Hillcrest Student Council gives students a voice in school improvement and opportunities to give back to the community. Students in grades 3-5 who are part of student council to develop school culture with spirit days and fundraising that focuses on civic engagement and giving back. Recently, the council led a campaign to raise money for people devastated by hurricanes in Texas. Upper grade students can also serve as Office Hawks by working in the office once a week. These students are selected by their teachers.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Socio-emotional development of students is vital for creating lifelong learners. Hillcrest educators value the continuing development and success of the whole child, knowing that children's lives will be positively impacted if they are prepared academically, socially, and emotionally for their life journey. This responsibility is not only one of the educational community, but also a shared responsibility of families, community members, business partnerships, and the greater community. Partnership with parents and teachers is especially vital in a child's development. At Hillcrest, learning about families begins in early August, as teachers schedule individual conferences to meet parents and to begin building a positive relationship with their new families. These early visits facilitate learning about the family's native country, the language spoken in the home, and family traditions (foods, games, dances, music, celebrations, holidays). Parents are encouraged to share their hopes and dreams for their child and to give teachers insight into their vision for their child's education. They discuss each child's strengths, weaknesses, goals, and interests. Educators use this collective understanding as the foundation that will support the coming school year.

Another relationship-building activity that Hillcrest educators employ is daily class meetings, which are held the first 25 minutes of the day to set the tone for respectful learning. Students learn to help each other and to solve problems in class meetings. The meetings build self-esteem and a climate of trust among the students as they make decisions that impact their world. Class meetings support social, emotional, and academic learning. Class meetings were the impetus in a class partnering with residents in an assisted-living home for individuals with Alzheimer's disease. They also inspired a class to raise funds to dig wells in South Sudan so that families could access clean well water. Finally, staff members and community organizations provide cross-grade Club Activities on Wednesday afternoons during the school day to enrich students' learning. Students choose from a smorgasbord of opportunities to learn about topics that interest them and to enhance their skills in that area. This year's choices ranged from activities in the arts to coding to robotics to athletics to cooking to sewing to painting to maker space. Students are often heard saying, "We can't miss Wednesday - it's Club Day!"

Hillcrest staff, parents, and students are committed to providing our students with a quality education. From implementing standards-based lesson plans to enhancing our students' experiences to improving our community, Hillcrest truly is a unique learning environment.