



## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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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

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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):
- 41 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 20 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 12 High schools
  - 3 K-12 schools
- 76 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
<b>PreK</b>	36	28	64
<b>K</b>	54	44	98
<b>1</b>	49	30	79
<b>2</b>	57	52	109
<b>3</b>	43	38	81
<b>4</b>	61	54	115
<b>5</b>	50	45	95
<b>6</b>	0	0	0
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	350	291	641

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 21 % Asian
  - 32 % Black or African American
  - 6 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 33 % White
  - 7 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2016 – 2017 school year: 13%

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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	44
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	32
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	76
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	597
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.13
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	13

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 8 %  
54 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Amharic, Arabic, Chin, Chinese (Cantonese), Chinese (Mandarin), English, French, Gujarati, Korean, Mandinka (Mandingo), Nepali, Portuguese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 31 %  
Total number students who qualify: 197

8. Students receiving special education services: 19 %  
123 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>26</u> Autism                  | <u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                 | <u>7</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness           | <u>18</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>44</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>17</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>8</u> Emotional Disturbance    | <u>46</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment       | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability  | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

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

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	29
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	27
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	23
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 29:1

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

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

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2017.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
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.

We embrace and celebrate our rich diversity, engage students in the learning process, accelerate student achievement, differentiate instruction that recognizes and builds upon student strengths, establish high academic standards, and provide a safe and nurturing environment where students develop the fundamental skills necessary to be successful, self-motivated, and respectful citizens.

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**

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Waterloo Elementary has proudly served our community for 53 years. The students, staff, and families of Waterloo are proud of our rich tradition of excellence, dedication, creativity, and compassion. Waterloo serves a wonderfully diverse community of learners. One component of our diversity can be seen through the lens of race and ethnicity. However, other components of diversity are represented in ways that are not visible, but never-the-less positively influences our school culture. These components include socio-economic status, opportunities to be involved, and the variety of services accessed by students.

In terms of socio-economic status, over 30% of students at Waterloo live at or below the poverty line. Such designations do not define a student, his/her abilities, or their family's capacity to support education. With that being said, teachers and staff at Waterloo are cognizant of the potential obstacles that could be encountered by students and families living in poverty. To that end, we developed a school wide Professional Learning Community (PLC) in which teachers and staff alternate participation via typical classroom learning and online discussion boards. Both opportunities are facilitated and monitored by Waterloo staff. The purpose of our PLC is to increase the awareness of strategies, direct and indirect, to promote engagement, enhance communication, actively seek partnerships with families that ultimately ensure the social and academic success of our students.

The Waterloo PTA and administration, teachers, and staff share a collaborative, supportive, and active partnership with the primary goal being to enhance the educational experience of all students. The PTA is actively involved in providing opportunities for all students that not only builds upon curriculum, but also brings the community together in unique and genuine ways. In terms of curriculum extensions, the PTA has worked in conjunction with the school to provide science assemblies, artists in residence, and cultural arts exposure. The PTA also sponsors evening and weekend activities that allow staff, students, and families to meet, interact, and enjoy one another's company. Although our families' level of involvement varies based on individual family responsibilities and circumstances, the value of education and a sense of community is shared by all. A strategic approach has been adopted to maximize participation, regardless of circumstances – as a result, participation continues to be robust and diverse.

The final component of our diversity is the multiple of services accessed by our students. Gifted and Talented (GT) programming targets students in grades 4 and 5 and provides math instruction to students who have demonstrated a capacity to work two years above grade level (AGL) in math. Additionally, through participation seminars and curriculum extension units, our GT students in grades 2-5 have opportunities to explore topics of personal interests or gain deeper understanding of specific curriculum. GT programs are accessible to all students. Over 8% of our student population access ESOL support. ESOL services are differentiated based on the level of listening, speaking, writing, and reading competency demonstrated by students. Instruction is delivered in a variety of ways: 1v1, co-teaching, small group. Over 19% of students at Waterloo receive some form of special education services. Waterloo hosts a regional program for students diagnosed with emotional disabilities within our comprehensive program, RECC programs supporting students with speech and mobility challenges, a local only Academic Life Skills (ALS) program, as well as special education and speech services throughout our preK-5 grade school. Waterloo emphasizes the importance of "Embracing Differences" and such a mindset can be observed everyday through the genuine, inclusive, and compassionate interactions fostered by teachers and students alike.

Waterloo recognizes student achievement through an Honor Roll program. Honor roll pins are distributed by the administration during individual class ceremonies on a quarterly basis. Student contributions to the Waterloo school community are highlighted by a teacher nomination process that concludes with a framed professionally photographed poster displayed in the hallways. These posters line our hallway and showcase genuine student examples of the Waterloo BEST (Being Respectful, Embracing Differences, Spend Time Learning, Taking Responsibility). Eight different students are selected 3x per year. Running clubs such as Girls on the Run and Let Me Run (boys) promote healthy lifestyle choices outside of school. Our school community is also supported by PBIS and our full-time counselor.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum:**

Waterloo Elementary teachers engage in relevant and job embedded professional development provided by Reading Support Teacher (RST), Math Support Teacher (MST), administrators, and County Curriculum Facilitators aimed to hone their understanding of Standards, ascertain an awareness of the variety of resources and manipulatives available to reinforce and extend learning, utilize data to drive instructional next steps, and gain confidence to differentiate and adapt instruction to meet the diverse learning needs demonstrated by their students.

Language Arts (Reading and Writing Curriculum): The Elementary Language Arts Program is designed to provide every student in grades K-5 with opportunities to become successful communicators, to read comprehensively, write effectively, speak meaningfully, and listen critically. Waterloo implements a student-centered, integrated instructional approach to ensure that learners become thinking, probing users of language. Throughout grades K-5, teachers have adopted the Jan Richardson Guided Reading and writing approach to delivering targeted comprehension (oral and written), decoding, and fluency instruction. Embedded within the structure of the reading block, the Daily Five is incorporated into the fabric of instruction. The Daily Five promotes independence, self-management, fluency, and reinforcement of previously taught skills. On Demand Writing is emphasized by all grade levels and is inclusive of narrative, informational, and opinion writing. Teachers focus upon the development of the students' ability to write with organization, appropriate use of support and evidence, and application of language mechanics.

Mathematics: Waterloo Elementary School's math program follows the Howard County Public School System's Mathematics Curriculum. The responsibility of elementary mathematics instruction is to instill a strong foundation of understanding within each skill set in order to support a student's continuous ability to learn and apply more demanding mathematics concepts and procedures in middle and high school. Waterloo's school improvement plan highlights the importance of incorporating the 8 mathematics practices, number sense awareness, rich tasks, problem solving opportunities through rich tasks and real life applications, and math journaling into the fabric of how math instruction is delivered to students. Waterloo's Number Talk initiative promotes vocabulary, development and application of leaning skills, and expression of justifications of math argument and concepts. It provides an opportunity for students to develop a deeper understanding of math concepts and tools to explore unknown quantities based on known skills.

Science: Waterloo Elementary School science curriculum is consistent with the Maryland State Science Curriculum and the Next Generation Science Standards. Waterloo implements a student-centered approach to scientific learning that engages students in a physically, intellectually engaged, and inquiry-based approach to the acquisition of skills and concepts. Teachers promote and value students' thinking, curiosity, and questioning. Whether involved in science investigations, or the Engineering Design Process, students engage in manipulating materials, making observations, seeking answers to their questions, solving problems, and explaining their ideas based on evidence. Among the content our students access throughout their preK-5th grade science experience are topics exploring Weather and Climate, Forces and interactions, Plant and Animal Survival, and Life Cycles and Traits.

Social Studies: Waterloo Elementary School's social studies curriculum is designed to actively engage students in the content of social studies by interacting with a variety of resources and demonstrating learnings through various performance-based assessments. The students explore a variety of social studies curriculum topics including units such as Money Matters, Project Citizenship, Changing Communities, and Mapping Our World. The culminating project of Waterloo Elementary School's social studies program occurs in 5th grade in an activity termed – Simulated Congressional Hearings (SCH). SCH provides an opportunity for students to work collaboratively as they simulate participation in hearing associated with interpretations relating the Constitution. Students appear before a panel of civic volunteers and justify their interpretations of Constitutional influences during debates focusing on current event topics.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At Waterloo Elementary School, students are provided the opportunity to not only be exposed to the fine arts, but also to gain a deeper understanding of the essential skills and knowledge associated with vocal and instrumental music, physical education, art, and technology/media. Additionally, student interests are explored, and related knowledge bases expanded, through involvement in enrichment activities provided by our Gifted and Talented teachers. In many instances, student talents and passions are discovered and cultivated as a result of their participation in Waterloo's programming.

**Instrumental Music:** Students in grades 3-5 have the opportunity to participate in learning and playing either a band instrument (grades 4/5) or a strings instrument (grades 3/4/5). There is both a band and a strings teacher who work 2.5 days at Waterloo. Students receive two 30 minute instructional lessons per week. Student progress is celebrated during a Winter and Spring concert held at a local high school with parents and community members as audience members. The strength of our instrumental program has been recognized as several Waterloo students have been selected to participate in the Howard County GT and Honors band/orchestra ensembles.

**Vocal Music:** Students in grades K-5 participate in vocal music class for 60 minutes per week. Waterloo has 1.5 full time vocal music teachers. Primary students are introduced to the foundations of music vocabulary, expressions, and representations across cultures and genres. Intermediate students apply the learned foundations to application of music reading, performing, interpretations, and cultural influences in the development of music genres. Students in grades 4/5 are provided an opportunity to participate in chorus. Chorus practice takes place on a bi-weekly basis for 45 minutes and culminates in two performances for our community in the Winter and Spring. Additionally, as a component of the intermediate music program, students are introduced to African Drumming. Students that display a talent and interest earn a position on the Waterloo African Drumming Ensemble.

**Physical Education:** Students in grades K-5 participate in physical education (PE) classes for 90 minutes per class. Primary grades attend PE classes three times per week for 30 minutes and intermediate students attend PE two times per week for 45 minutes. Waterloo has 2 full time PE teachers. Instruction is sequential and targeted in promoting muscle awareness and development. Students are active in small and large group activities aimed to continuously build and expand upon previously introduced skills and techniques. Complexity of activities increase with age and mastery. Waterloo's PE department is instrumental in multiple community initiatives that focus on healthy lifestyles. Among the community and school-wide events organized by our PE department are as follows: Family Fit Nights, Jump Rope for Heart, Family Dance Night, Turkey Trot, Field Day, and the 1st Tee Golf Program.

**Art:** Students in grades K-5 participate in art classes for 60 minutes per week. Classes attend one session each week. Waterloo has 1.5 art teachers. Instruction follows a hand on, interactive, self-exploratory model. Teachers introduce themes and artist studies at the beginning of every class. Art techniques involving clay, paint, various print media, chalk, and pencil are first modeled by teachers at a demonstration table and then students have opportunities to apply the technique at individual work stations. Student work created is displayed throughout the school and showcased at local art exhibits. Waterloo's art program offers evening Paint Nights aimed at facilitating family connections through art.

**Technology:** Students in grades K-5 participate in formal technology classes for 60 minutes, one time per week. Waterloo has 1.5 technology teachers. In addition to skills being taught in association with a progression of complexity based on age and mastery, our technology teachers emphasize the ideas of a digital footprint and responsible use of technology. Outside of formal technology classes, Waterloo possesses 5 laptop carts consisting of 30 laptops each. Laptop carts are signed out by teachers and incorporated into their delivery of curriculum.

**Media:** Students in grades K-5 participate in media classes for 45 minutes one time per week. Waterloo has 1.5 media teachers and 1 para educator. Students are exposed to a variety of authors and genres during media class. Additionally, research tools are introduced and applied, with varied and appropriate complexity. Waterloo media teachers expand their influence to the community through author in residence

programs, leading Battle of the Book competitions which involve a lively comprehension competition, and organizing book fairs throughout the year.

Gifted and Talented Enrichment Program: Although optional, students in grades 2-5 have the opportunity to participate in programming, provided by Waterloo's 2.0 GT teachers, aimed to deepen content understanding and/or explore interests. Curriculum Extension Units (CEUs) are semester long courses that provide additional depth and builds upon content taught in general grade level course. CEUs vary among grades and topics, but involve 2 hours of additional instruction/exploratory activities per week. Students who participate are responsible to make up missed instructional lessons. Instructional Seminars (IS) are interest based and students either participate in designed programming at school or at home. Examples of IS include engineering (Safe Racer, Rube Goldberg challenges), financial literacy, coding, photography, and robotics.

### **3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:**

In Waterloo's dedicated efforts to provide meaningful and targeted instruction that meets the individual needs of each child, our teachers and school improvement plans adhere to the following cyclical philosophy, Continuous Reflection- Intentional Implementations - Analytical of Results. This approach influences ongoing data discussions, interventions, long range planning, instructional methods, program development, and outreach efforts aimed to reinforce, extend, and enrich learning opportunities for all students.

With an understanding that the best intervention is purposeful, differentiated, and strong classroom instruction, administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches (Reading Support and Math Support Teachers) leverage informal and formal data to drive instruction, identify specific areas needed for improvement, and design a targeted response to ensure growth among all students. Formal data conversations are conducted on a bi-weekly basis within individual teams and a bi-monthly basis with the principal. Data conversations focus upon recognizing professional successes, as well as identifying emerging performance trends that exist within the class/grade level as a whole, instructional groups, individual outliers, and students on the cusp of acceleration. As teachers, coaches, and administrators analyze data collected and reflect upon what information can be ascertained by the data, discussions shift to developing an intentional and individualized instructional response to what the data is highlighting.

Specific data is leveraged when determining appropriate instructional methods, interventions, and appropriate assessments within the instructional program. Among the expansive formal data points utilized are: Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark System, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), formal summative assessments, On Demand writing assessments (opinion, information, and narrative), reading behavior checklists, Number Readiness Assessments, 3 Act Formative Math Tasks, PARCC itemized reports, etc). While formal data points are valued, informal observational data and formative exit assessments are also influential in the process.

Once instructional needs have been established, teachers and interventionists engage in an intentional planning process that includes consultation with Reading and Math Instructional coaches. Such consultation provides an opportunity to examine researched based intervention strategies, explore available resources that will enhance instruction, discuss structures within the frameworks of schedules and routines that could be refined, and brainstorm additional supports aimed at maximizing the intentional efforts to extend student learning.

Embedded in the long range and intentional intervention planning process is ongoing professional development (PD), provided by school based coaches and countywide experts, that is aligned with not only Waterloo's school improvement focus areas, curriculum standards, and inclusive of the district's digital resource Canvas tool, but responsive to the needs of individual teachers and teams.

Among the strategies implemented to support struggling learners range from 1v1 reinforcement, small group re-teaching and extension, collaborative learning approaches with peers, double dose math and reading interventions. These strategies require active communication, purposeful coordination, and progress monitoring among all stakeholders involved. Additionally, researched based intervention and support

programs, such as LLI, Wilson, and technology based programs such as Dream Box, Ten Marks, Core Clicks, NewsELA, Achieve the Core are obtained by administration and delivered by trained curriculum experts.

Feedback and individual conferencing provided directly by teachers and/or via collaborative peer partnerships are essential components to Waterloo's instructional program and are emphasized as part of the school improvement plan. Communication, resources, homework, and feedback are shared with parents through a variety of technological means including Canvas, email, text, web based activities, and websites.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Waterloo Elementary school has cultivated a positive school culture conducive to teaching learning, and “being” through genuine, fun, and compassionate interactions, shared expectations for academic, social, and behavioral responsibility, and a common belief that every person’s voice should be valued and respected. Since the culture and climate of any school is reflective of the principal and staff, our principal emphasizes the essential responsibility every staff member has to represent themselves, our school, and our profession with integrity and professionalism.

The importance of developing genuine, mutually respectful, and supportive relationships with students, and their families, remain the foundation of success at Waterloo. With that being said, many beneficial programs and approaches have been implemented to motivate and engage students at Waterloo. Among these programs and initiatives include morning meetings and restorative circles have been adopted by all classrooms in an effort to proactively enhance lines of communication and develop rapport among students. Safety Patrol is a program that partners 5th grade students with Kindergarten students in an effort to create a true school community where older students support safe transition to the bus during dismissal. The Gentleman’s Honor Club focuses upon male students initiating random acts of kindness throughout the building, being good citizens, and helping others. Guest speakers inspire the group about the responsibilities of being a man and each participant is gifted with a Waterloo tie. Honor Roll pins are distributed personally by the principal on a quarterly basis as a recognition for strong academic achievement and as a motivation to improve performance to earn the special recognition in future quarters. Waterloo’s PAW Pal program partners teachers and at risk students to provide additional adult support and another layer of positive interactions/relationships to support academic and behavioral growth.

At Waterloo Elementary, according the HCPSS School Climate Survey, staff morale, feelings of openness and trust, and the sense of teamwork has consistently ranked among the top 3 of all Howard County Public Schools in categories such as Staff Moral, Environment of Openness and Trust, and Collaboration. Teachers and staff feel valued and supported in a variety of ways. The principal recognizes teachers and staff not only as professionals, but as people as well. The administration takes time to celebrate personal milestones (engagements, pregnancies, home and car purchases, children accomplishments) as well as professional success (student growth, completion of degree program, awards, and special recognition). Although professionalism and integrity are clear expectations of all teachers and staff members, the administration is purposeful in creating an enjoyable and family atmosphere where staff are excited to invest time, energy, and additional efforts to support students and colleagues.

The principal is transparent about the decision-making process and vision. He actively seeks the input, expertise, and perspectives from staff, regardless of positions, roles, or titles. As a result, the Waterloo staff is actively engaged in not only their classrooms and teams, but throughout the school as well. Such an approach fosters a wonderful sense of community. Stability in team allows for greater collaboration and the development of expertise that can be accessed throughout the building.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Engaging families and the community continues to be an instrumental component of Waterloo Elementary School's efforts to ensure every student’s success, whether that success is measured academically, socially, and emotionally. Active, inclusive, and transparent communication with families and our community partners provide proactive opportunities for collaboration and shared understanding. These efforts enhance Waterloo Elementary as a community hub of information, guidance, and partnerships.

Parents are valued and active partners in the education of their children at Waterloo. As such, this important partnership is leveraged in many different ways to promote student growth and performance. Parent/teacher communication takes many different forms and is differentiated to meet the communication desires and needs of the individual family and child. Conferences, phone calls, and email communication

are initiated by both teachers and parents. Embedded in such formal conversations are discussions centered around student strengths, areas needed for improvement, and ways that parents could support extension or retention activities at home. The professional, caring, and respectful interactions between teachers and parents provide a strong message of support to our students. The school principal communicates directly to parents and community members via an email platform and consistently follows up with emailed responses/questions/concerns with personalized phone calls in an effort to build trust, partnership, and understanding. Additionally, technology is utilized not only for communication of questions, concerns, or ideas between school and parents, but also to share instructional resources and feedback. Waterloo Elementary incorporates a web-based platform to provide parents a glimpse into curriculum standards, scope and sequence of curriculum delivery, evidence of student work, and grading/teacher feedback.

Parent representation in the school improvement process is critical in soliciting the voice of all stakeholders, not just school-based teachers and staff. PTA leadership provides a diverse and representative voice, and a unique and important perspective, in Waterloo's decision-making process. PTA and administration partner on understanding issues related to instruction, student performance, school culture, and school security. The Waterloo PTA also partners with administration and staff to enrich the school experience for our students and families through organizing multiple evening social and educational events. Community and staff participation are consistently robust and diverse.

Traditions such as an annual food and coat drive in association with a school-wide Turkey Trot (1 mile run) and a community-sponsored backpack drive, filled with food items to be distributed during Spring Break, demonstrate a social conscience that is shared by the collective school community. Traditional responsibilities of 5th grade students include acting as escorts during dismissal for our Kindergarten students who ride buses home. It is a subtle, but powerful community-building practice among the oldest and youngest students in the building. International Night, when foods, clothing, and customs of our international students are showcased, celebrate the uniqueness that exist among our students and families. The weekend Carnival is a wonderful tradition that brings together former, current, and future Waterloo students/families.

Community partnerships with local businesses assist with the recognition and celebration of student performance (free meal cards and dessert coupons in recognition of academic and behavior achievements), the enhancement of special event programs (fruit and water for Turkey Trot, fruits and vegetables for the Try-IT program), fundraising through restaurant nights (portions of proceeds are donated back to our PTA), and social programs (donation of school supplies, food items, and clothing for families who express economic needs).

### **3. Professional Development:**

In order to positively influence language arts performance and growth among our students, our Waterloo Elementary staff works collaboratively with our Administration, Reading Support Teacher (RST) and Reading Specialist (RS) in order to refine and deepen understanding associated with the guided reading model of delivering reading and writing instruction. In addition to consultation and guidance actively sought from the RST and RS, resources that help identify comprehension roadblocks and offer prescriptive next steps are the focal point of ongoing learning connected with literacy professional development and long-range planning sessions (LRP). Embedded as a professional development point of emphasis during LRPs, teachers develop consistent, engaging, and appropriate discussion and writing opportunities to showcase levels of comprehension through various responses to reading tasks. Expectations concerning routines and accountability of IDR and Close Reading are consistent among and within grade-level teams. Data collected on reading levels as measured by F & P, along with written responses will be analyzed during Data Discussions and will be a pivotal influence to drive differentiated instructional implementations. Data discussions are conducted on an ongoing basis with the principal and with grade-level teaching teams.

In order to positively impact mathematical performance and growth among our students, our Waterloo Elementary staff works collaboratively with our Administration and Math Support Teacher (MST) in order to design timely and thoughtful instructional opportunities, aligned with Standards, so that students may be

provided opportunities to engage in activities that foster high cognitive demand and productive struggle. The development of appropriate and rich tasks are based on a clear understanding of not only foundational skills needed to be successful, but also a clear vision of the diverse ways students can express, communicate, and demonstrate application of such skills applied to problem solving situations. In addition to the development of rich tasks, the MST and Instructional Leadership team at Waterloo design professional development plans aimed to support teachers strategically by debriefing struggles and strategies instrumental in navigating tasks. An emphasis of PD sessions is placed on embedding instructional opportunities to develop perseverance and problem solving strategies within our students.

The PD plan also emphasizes active, comprehensive, and specific communication (oral and written) into the fabric of how math instruction is delivered. A point of continued PD emphasis in math is to naturally extend and incorporate the benefits of Number Talk discussions, specific math vocabulary, an awareness of number relationships, awareness of strategy application, and the math practices into mathematical writing and representations. Teachers work in partnership with our MST to develop consistent and appropriate discussion and writing opportunities that leverage thoughtful extensions, application of strategies, and providing in depth justifications and/or justifications.

Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) places a priority on providing targeted professional development to not only grade level teachers and support staff, but also principals and assistant principals. HCPSS supports the important role administrators play as instructional leaders in the building through monthly curriculum meetings. During these ongoing trainings, curriculum leaders facilitate learning among the administrative personnel on the most current research on instructional strategies, standard interpretation, and resources available to support teachers and the general school community.

#### **4. School Leadership:**

Every teacher and staff member at Waterloo, regardless of identified title, is recognized as a leader. Waterloo's principal has set forth a clear vision and a set of expectations involving high-quality rigorous instruction, equity in action, a cyclical approach to data analysis, and fostering an environment conducive to teaching, learning, and "being." However, he actively seeks the expertise, insights, and perspectives of all stakeholders in order to maximize the potential success of every initiative, strategy, and decision. Such an approach has cultivated a culture where professional dialogue is encouraged and indulged; every voice, whether it be students, staff, or community is valued. These collective and diverse voices are actively sought in an effort to refine, and in some cases revise, approaches aimed to enhance academic performance, social interactions, internal structures, and the comprehensive culture of Waterloo Elementary.

All leadership efforts are aligned to six core school values: (1) Fostering a positive environment among students, staff, and community, (2) Adhering to a cyclical data philosophy of being continuously reflective, intentional with implementations, and analytical of results, (3) Incorporating math practices and number sense into the fabric of instruction, (4) Enhancing oral and written communication, (5) Ensuring deep understanding through extension activities and problem solving opportunities, and (6) Planning job embedded professional development.

Discussions and actions focusing on the alignment of these core values to the design of instructional delivery of learning standards, data driven instructional interventions, student support team actions, special education policy review and instructional programming, staff engagement, and family outreach are dependent upon the confidence our principal has invested into our staff. Grade level Instructional Team Leaders (ITLS), Student Support Team members (psychologist, counselor, alternative education, nurse, PPW), Intervention Team members (RS, RST, MST, ESOL), Special Education Team (ITL, Crisis Interventionist), and Para Educator/Student Assistant ITL all engage and lead their respective teams as they implement policy and school improvement efforts with fidelity. Discussions, decisions, and requests for support arising from team meetings are documented in a Google Doc and shared with administration.

Waterloo's leadership team consists of 15 staff members and is inclusive of each group, including the administration. Members provide direction and influence, through sharing of perspectives, awareness of impact, and on school-wide topics such as school improvement plan development and review. The

leadership team also provides guidance on, instructional initiatives, family engagement, utilization of technology for instruction, communication, and testing, as well as resource allocation through disbursement of Materials of Instruction (MOI) funds.

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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Influencing any successful school, program, or initiative is the effective convergence of multiple structures, leadership approaches, instructional practices, staffing considerations, inherent mindsets, and overall school culture. With an understanding of the multi-layered and comprehensive approach essential to fostering, and maintaining, an environment conducive to teaching, learning, and leading in schools with demonstrated excellence, the integration of Guided Reading practices throughout grades K-5 at Waterloo Elementary has been instrumental in the significant growth realized by our students in reading, as measured by benchmarks, MAP, and PAARC assessments.

The effective and successful implementation of the Guided Reading and Writing (GRW) model in grades k-5 at Waterloo is the result of a coordinated approach to ongoing professional development at the county, school, and team levels. Additionally, aligned expectations and feedback associated with the delivery of GRW practices is continuously reinforced through administration observations, administrative and coach walk-throughs, and aligned planning opportunities for teacher, interventionists, and para-educators. Finally, the common language and instructional guidance connected with embedded intervention strategies enhance the communication and focus between teachers and interventionists.

The Guided Reading philosophy involves differentiated instructional groups that consist of 6-8 students and emphasizes instructional strategies throughout three phases of reading: Before, During, and After. During the Before Reading stage teachers establish a purpose for reading, introduce and explore potential unfamiliar vocabulary that students will encounter as they read a selected section, facilitate predictive discussions, and review previously taught reading strategies. Such proactive and intentional planning enhances fluency and comprehension. During Reading provides opportunities for teachers to ascertain levels of understanding, strategy implementation, and fluency demonstrated by students. Teachers implement thoughtful and flexible questioning as they engage in 1 v1 conferencing, data collection, and observations in the During Reading stage. Finally, teachers strengthen comprehension skills and recognize strategies used by students. Additionally, students write about reading, focusing on specific comprehension skills, in their reading journals during Guided Writing, a strategy that takes place in the After Reading stage.

At Waterloo, we were intentional with the planning of ongoing professional development as teachers, interventionists, Reading Support Teacher (RST), and administrators work diligently to understand the various strategies that could leverage guided reading strategies to support and grow emergent, early, transitional, and fluent readers within their classrooms. Instructional Team Leaders (ITL) continue the focus on student performance as it relates to GRW through the facilitation of data conversations that focus upon what the data is informing and the intentional instructional response to the data connected to class trends, individual outliers, and students on the cusp of acceleration.