

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):
- 121 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 16 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 78 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 215 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	32	26	58
1	50	38	88
2	30	34	64
3	39	34	73
4	33	37	70
5	34	22	56
6	29	22	51
7	38	28	66
8	20	27	47
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	305	268	573

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 8 % Asian
 - 9 % Black or African American
 - 6 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 64 % White
 - 13 % 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: 2%

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	3
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	13
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	611
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2%
10 Total number ELL

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

Albanian, Italian, Spanish, Mandarin

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 0%
Total number students who qualify: 0

8. Students receiving special education services: 9 %
52 Total number of students served

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

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>5</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>5</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>20</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>18</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
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.	20
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	14
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	11
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., 22:1 291:1

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%	97%	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.

William M. Meredith is a caring and collaborative community where students are empowered to own their educational experience through exploration and innovation. We cultivate reciprocal relationships between families, students, faculty, and staff. We encourage and foster a growth mindset for all members of our learning community.

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

Rapid development, bustling restaurants, and rising property values make the Queen Village neighborhoods one of the most desired areas to buy a new home for young families in the Philadelphia area. Once a quirky and artistic neighborhood that shared borders with South Street and the Italian Market, Queen Village has seen a shift from a working class neighborhood to an elite destination for families who can afford to live in the neighborhood. The neighborhood boasts one of the highest achieving K-8 schools in the district, William Meredith School.

Recently we opened kindergarten enrollment. Over one hundred hopeful families lined up outside of our building with gas bills and birth certificates in hand, starting at three am, to secure one of the sixty slots available. This issue of basic supply and demand has dramatically changed the demographics of our school. Our classrooms are becoming visibly more white. However, our middle years classrooms continue to be filled with students from diverse backgrounds that come from various socioeconomic statuses. This has propelled a specific mission, aligned to closing the achievement gap, and supporting a school wide initiative where staff sees education as a means to social justice.

The William M. Meredith School was built between 1930-1931. The school primarily served an immigrant community who lived and worked in South Philadelphia. The school has seen many transformations. In its early years Meredith was a K-8 neighborhood school. In the 1980s the school became a performing arts magnet school. Beginning in the 90's through the early 2000's the school was a desegregation school that continued its tradition of arts education. Most recently we are seen as one of the most sought after neighborhood K-8 schools in the Philadelphia School District as a result of out performing many of the schools in our peer group.

We have many traditions here at Meredith. Every Spring our students put on a full length musical production that funds our arts programming for the year to come. The school show is a student run production that draws a packed house of community members. Yearly we host a Meredith 5K run/walk and Family Fun day to raise funds for the school and promote healthy living. We host a Harvest Feast every fall that allows families to feature cuisine that is traditional in their homes. Our school sponsors a family learning program entitled, "Saturday Symposium" that teaches families how to best support their students as they navigate not only academics in school but also the social situations that arise.

There are many strategies used at our school that encourage and challenge all students to develop to their full potential academically, emotionally, physically, socially, and culturally. Mindfulness and social emotional learning has become a hallmark of our school's mission and vision. We have used the "Power of Three" as a vehicle to teach our students about taking care of themselves, each other and their school community. Every classroom in our school utilizes the power of three to encourage students to make good choices and students are recognized school-wide for their efforts whether by announcement or appearing on the Power of Three wall at the front of the school.

Our school focuses on the importance of cultural competency and values social justice learning. Every single stall bathroom in our building is labeled "Gender Neutral" to ensure a welcoming and safe environment for all students. We are a school that truly works to ensure that students feel respected and valued regardless of race, class, gender, religious affiliation and/or sexuality. Our curriculum is aimed at our mission around supporting the empowerment of our students to own their educational experience through exploration and innovation. We cultivate reciprocal relationships between families, students, faculty, and staff. We encourage and foster a growth mindset for all members of our learning community.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

We are not a school that only follows one set of resources in regard to teaching all content areas. We recognize that in order to adequately meet the standards in all areas we must be resourceful and use best practices and supplemental material to enhance our programming. We follow the National Common Core Standards in all content areas and work hard to seek out innovative ideas to enhance the curricula.

In literacy, our school has adopted the workshop model of teaching reading and writing. We send our K-8 teachers to Teachers College at Columbia University to learn the vertical articulation of standards as they relate to the Units of Study found in Lucy Calkins readers writers workshop model. Students are immersed in complex studies of craft and genre in both reading and writing. Teachers launch units that last about a month with a sequence of mini-lessons in which they teach students skills and strategies that students then apply in their own independent work. Teachers conference with students to differentiate for their needs in both reading and writing.

Teachers are consistently coached to enhance components of the School District of Philadelphia's framework to promote all students reading on grade level by the end of grade 3; the number one predictor of school success. Great focus is put on the literacy classroom environment and culture, guided reading, shared reading, intentional read alouds, independent literacy work, and writer's workshop. We are teaching students that the transferrable literacy skills and strategies to access and enhance said skills is a toolbox that will be forever at their disposal as they prepare for future learning.

We carry these literacy best practices into our intermediate and middle school classrooms. For example, it is common to find middle school students reading an on level text on the carpet or in a cozy nook. During a writer's workshop, you may find middle school students editing each other's work through peer conferencing or conferring with the teacher. Our older students also follow the Units of Study written by Calkins with elements of the Atwell program. Students in grades 3-8 delve deeper into authentic literature to look for meaning and connections to the world around them. For example, our 8th grade students are currently reading "To Kill A Mockingbird". During this unit, students will study the historical context of the text, engage in mock trials, and reflect on the impact of the text as it relates to modern life. We firmly believe that best practices such as reading aloud to students and providing them modeled thinking is effective and beneficial at all grade levels.

In mathematics we follow the National and Pennsylvania Common Core Standards. Utilizing the scope and sequence provided by the School District of Philadelphia, we work on supplementing the programs we are given with meaningful project-based opportunities and hands-on experiences. Our school has determined that in order for students to be successful in mathematics they need a strong, solid foundation in number sense. For this reason, we utilize tools for developing numeracy understanding like number lines in all grade levels, procedures and routines to support estimation skills and we refrain from teaching standard algorithms until students demonstrate an understanding of numbers. In grades k-8 we utilize OGAP (Ongoing Assessment Project) to enhance our math curriculum. OGAP is a formative assessment system that provides tools, practices, support materials and professional development. Our teachers have been trained in the framework of understanding that OGAP provides and now look at student thinking and strategies and determine next steps to move them along the learning trajectory frameworks.

The K-5 standards provide students with a foundation in whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions and decimals. Supporting our young students in developing a strong foundation in these topics allows them to then move into application. Once students have developed a strong foundation, students are then able to apply that understanding to topics such as geometry, algebra, probability and statistics in grades 6 through 8.

All students from grades K-8 engage in inquiry and hands-on experiential learning to meet Common Core Science Standards and Next Generation Science Standards. Each grade studies a unit about Earth and Space

Science, Physical Science, and Life Science. In order to meet all Science Standards our teachers do not use a textbook but rather provide authentic learning experiences for our students. Our K-8 scientists participate in an annual school-wide science fair and many students in Grades 6-8 participate in the District level science fair; Carver Science Fair.

We utilize the National and Pennsylvania Common Core Social Studies Standards to drive our curriculum in grades k-8. We pride ourselves in using many alternative curriculum resources for learning social studies. Some examples of this include: "Reading Like A Historian from Stanford University," "Howard Zinn's A People's History of the United States" and "A Young People's History of the United States." We also use Teaching Tolerance's program: Educating For A Diverse Democracy to enhance the curriculum. We also incorporate a diverse array of periodicals including Time For Kids and Junior Scholastic weekly. These periodicals allow students to apply their learning of history to current events and challenges. For example, students may study immigration in a US History class and apply their understanding of push and pull factors to migrant workers who pick berries in California. Our students also participate in the National Geographic Bee and our school's winner moves on to the state level of competition.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

All students receive a plethora of opportunities for curricular enrichment at Meredith. We genuinely believe that all students flourish when they have opportunities to become well-rounded learners.

Our language programming consists of two curriculums. First we host a guest teacher from Italy through the US Cultural Vistas Program. Our Italian teacher serves our primary grades, k-3, in an effort to expose them to early language acquisition. She manages cultural programming throughout the year where students are able to learn about Italian culture. The students also learn songs in Italian that they perform at our school concerts. Students in grades 4-8 receive Spanish language twice a week. The Spanish teacher sponsors cultural events such as a school "Ofrenda de Dia los Muertos" to honor family members who have passed. This was particularly powerful this year as one of our beloved teachers passed away. This program gave students a space to grieve and honored the legacy of their teacher, all while learning about another culture. Our Spanish teacher also manages our Hispanic Heritage Month assembly. Students perform traditional dances, sing songs in Spanish, and share the stories of innovators and problem solvers of Hispanic descent.

We have a full time art teacher who teaches robust art lessons to all of our students weekly. She focuses on art history, composition, and connects her lessons to mentor texts. Our hallways are filled with the creations that our students make in her class. Our art teacher also runs an extra curricular set and prop design program that empowers students to design the sets for the school musical. The art teacher also supports the cultural programming at our school and helps to facilitate student engagement in events such as the Black History Month assembly, Hispanic Heritage Month assembly, and the Women's History month programming.

Our physical education teacher services all students in grades K-8. He teaches the students how to engage in team sports and practice good sportsmanship. Our gym teacher is a certified yoga instructor who focuses on best practices regarding health from both the east and the west. He incorporates elements of cardiovascular activity, yoga, nutrition, and team sports in every gym class.

All students at Meredith receive music on a weekly basis. During that time our music teacher provides lessons on music history, theory, and composition. Through grants we were able to establish a keyboard lab that our music teacher uses to teach students how to read and play music. Our music teacher supports our extra curricular programming by running three choirs for students in grades 3-8 and is the musical director for the spring show. He also contributes to our parent Saturday Symposiums to teach English language learning through music.

We have a computer and technology program that supports our mission to prepare students for the 21st century jobs. Our teacher sees all students weekly to teach a computer skills program. Our students learn to code and participate each year in the week of code event. This event is a global initiative to educate students about computer programming and to encourage them to code programs during the school day. Our students compete against each other to see which class can write the most code in a week. This event is facilitated by

our computer and technology teacher during the National Computer Science Week. Students in grade K-8 participate. Our students also compete yearly in the school district Tech Expo. This year our students placed second in the district wide competition. We also have a Lego Robotics program that gets students interested in STEM projects. Our Snapology program is a community partnership that teaches robotics to children in grades K-3. Our 8th grade tech club designs and edits the school yearbook using mac software.

We are lucky to boast a fully functioning library thanks to an amazing teaching assistant and parent volunteers. Collectively our library team works together to raise funds so they can provide current reading materials that are of interest to our students. Our library is visited weekly by classrooms. The library is open daily for students to borrow materials.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

We have implemented the workshop modality for reading, writing, and mathematics. This method of instruction allows teachers an entry point for all students to access the curriculum, differentiate for all learners and provide extensions and enrichment for students who are excelling. This workshop philosophy focuses on student choice of reading, writing and mathematics and allows students to engage in work with peers and inquiry circles. It is inherently tiered as teachers are able to work one on one with students to further enhance strengths and to address areas of need.

As a result of our methods, our students have become flexible and resilient learners who read broadly and deeply and are persistent problem solvers. Literacy and math weave its way into other curricular areas around the school at all grade levels. For example, our visual arts teacher often starts lessons for primary students by reading a picture book to students to prepare for a lesson on illustration or a specific artist. In health classes at the middle school level, students are discussing issues around social-emotional health while practicing standards-based literacy skills such as citing text evidence to support a theme of a passage. In science, students are using data to analyze experiments.

In all content areas, teachers have moved away from being the “sage on the stage” to that of a facilitator. Students work collaboratively in small groups on work that is differentiated to meet their needs. Teachers circulate during workshop and provide support and higher-order questioning to push thinking. For example, consistent checks for understanding are implemented throughout math-based mini-lessons. Teachers use Plickers, a tool that allows teachers to collect real-time data using barcodes to assess student understanding. While students go to centers, the teacher works one-on-one with students based on the level of understanding evident in the checks teachers have in place. Additionally, students in heterogeneous groups have tiered activities/work to apply the new skill they learned in the mini lesson. Technology is implemented in all classes in many different ways. For example, teachers use Google Classroom to communicate, assess and provide feedback. In the math and literacy workshop students access adaptive software that allows students to move through math at their own pace in accordance with their own individual levels. For example, students needing intervention in literacy will use Razzkids to access interactive on-level books for guided reading.

We have moved to a student-centered approach to learning. We find that when students are challenged to notice and wonder, ask questions and discover rules and algorithms, they are better equipped to problem solve in the real world. The math block typically starts with a discovery activity where students are asked to notice and wonder about an image or a problem. They are then able to figure out, grapple with and teach each other the skill or concept. The teacher is a facilitator, helping kids to connect their ideas but not the generator of the knowledge. The mini-lesson is followed by center work where students spend 15-20 minutes in a center while the teacher is able to pull small groups to support misunderstandings, intervention and enrichment.

We are constantly looking for innovative ways to engage students in math. We use three act math lessons to foster real life problem solving skills and encourage project-based learning to deepen student understanding of math concepts. For example, a math lesson may start with a very short video clip that shows students a real world scenario. Students are then prompted to generate their own questions based on what they saw in the video. The teacher, as the facilitator, supports students in narrowing down their questions to one

mathematical question that can be answered with more information. Students then share their estimates of what they think the answer will be and provide their reasoning. They then determine what information they need to solve the problem they have posed. The teacher provides that information and students are then tasked with solving the problem with the information provided. The third act is the big reveal where students get to see what the answer is and discuss the results.

To meet our academic goals we meet bi-monthly as a team of teachers and support staff to evaluate the response to intervention programs that are in place. We review individual class data to find the needs our school community has. Once we identify student needs we follow a data cycle that allows us to respond and plan for intervention. An example of this is how we support our district goal to get 100% of our students in grade K-3 reading at or above their targeted reading levels. To ensure that we meet this target we assess students reading behaviors using the DRA system of assessment, the Aimsweb assessments, and qualitative observations during guided reading such as anecdotal and running records of conferences. We also use District wide assessments such as the Benchmarks to inform our practice and support our students. When a child is behind the target we support them by giving them quality supports from our reading specialist. This attention to data allows students to receive the services they need to meet their individual targets.

Our school has partnered with Carnegie Learning, Ongoing Assessment Project (OGAP) and Children's Literacy Initiative for enhancing instruction in math and literacy respectively. Two school-based teacher coaches work in conjunction with coaches from these entities to observe, assess, and do turn-around training around effective and best practices in instruction. As a result, the mindset of teachers has shifted from more traditional approaches to the aforementioned practices in teaching. Students are given more responsibility for their learning. As a result, reading and writing levels are consistently rising and gains are being made in math assessment. This is evident through statewide and district-wide standardized assessments. It is also evident in criterion-based assessments such as DRAs and grade level math Benchmark Assessments. Various assessments are administered regularly to assess and progress monitor student achievement and teachers meet weekly to review compiled data to consistently report on and address not only the needs of students who are considered in need of strategic and intensive intervention, but also those who need more challenging work who are considered on target or advanced. We use online literacy monitoring and math monitoring tools through the use of Google Drive to routinely analyze student data and revise teaching practices as evidenced through this data analysis.

We are a high performing school with a large number of students identified as mentally gifted. Gifted Individual Education Plans are written for each of these students to address their specific learning needs so classroom teachers can provide tiered instruction to match these students' capabilities in their areas of interest and their identified gifts and/or talents.

To be sure we are intentional and specific with all learners needs, we use data that is broken down by student achievement for each state standard and use these subgroups to plan for accelerated learning for those that are advanced, supportive and challenging instruction for those on target and reteaching for those that are strategic or intensive. This work has created a student population where over 90% of our students are reading at or above grade level regardless of subgroup and over 90% of our eighth graders are accepted into the high school of their choice.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

We are a school that pays attention to the social and emotional well being of our community. This is evident through the implementation of our growth mindset work. We focus on growth mindset work that teaches students the potential they have yet to uncover. As a result of our growth mindset professional development, our teachers have shifted the language they use in classrooms to address successes and failures. Instead of saying "You are so smart" you will often hear our teachers proclaim, "It is clear that you worked hard on this concept" or "You didn't get it yet. Keep working on it." This shift allows students the opportunity to fail, learn from their failure, and grapple with challenges. It also highlights what we know about the brain's power to change. When we teach students that intelligence is not fixed we afford them the opportunity to realize that their potential is in their hands.

Every morning our principal announces birthdays of students and staff and reminds us all to take care of ourselves, each other and the school community. This constant reminder of our vision and mission along with our celebration of our school members has resulted in a kinder, more tolerant community.

We have also created a safe space for students who are in the minority. This includes students of color, students from the LGBTQ community, and students who practice various religions. We honor everyone's differences and highlight the good that is in all people in our communities. We host a monthly discussion group on race, use GLSEN guidelines to train our staff on how to best support LGBT students, and highlight various cultures and religions through our social studies programming. We have been featured in many local papers for our efforts around this work.

At Meredith we have created a social emotional learning class that focuses on a multitude of issues that students face in middle school. The students have opportunities to discuss issues such as how to represent themselves on social media, identity development, and why nutrition and a good night of sleep is good for the adolescent brain. Through anonymous feedback from the students, we have discovered that this class has made students feel safe and loved at our school. Our incidents worthy of detentions and suspensions have decreased dramatically since the class's implementation.

To create an environment where teachers feel valued, the administration at Meredith opted to receive anonymous feedback from its teachers through the Insight Survey. With support from a leadership coach, our principal addresses the areas that teachers feel they need support in and helps to maintain the practices that are working. In the most recent Insight Survey data, teachers felt they were valued because they are able to propose agendas and lead grade group meetings on a monthly basis, they are highlighted for best practices, and they feel like the principal and leadership team are approachable and open to collaboration. Our teachers work much like a family. This was apparent when we endured the sudden loss of a beloved colleague. We attended group therapy sessions to cope with our grief and leaned on each other for support.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

We make every effort to positively engage with the larger community surrounding Meredith. Meredith is a school that is constantly filled with parents. From the monthly Coffee with the Principal to our incredibly robust career day celebration, parents are a constant presence in our building. We meet quarterly with parents to share their child's progress with them through individual conferencing. The students conduct quarterly writing celebrations where parents are invited for a reception at the school that features the students' writing they have published. When a child struggles, we proactively come together as a team to invite parents to collaborate on a plan of action with their guidance and support.

We have an active school advisory council that brings parents and teachers together to discuss operations, academics, and programming at the school. Our Home and School Association works tirelessly to collaborate with our parents, teachers, and principal to ensure that we are raising funds for goods and services that will directly impact our students' wellbeing and achievement.

We have invited many community organizations like the Mazzone Center into our school to provide our middle school students with life skills and sexuality education. Additionally, we collaborate with the Queen Village Neighbors Association and the South Street/Headhouse Business District to support local children, families and businesses. Our principal has been a panelist at QVNA meetings to discuss overcrowding in schools. Our leadership team has been welcoming to our neighbors and has partnered with many to bring the best opportunities to our school. Our leadership team is very passionate about social justice. Our principal has brought families together with school staff to engage in monthly dialogues about race, class, gender, etc. These Anti-Racist discussions occur at school on a monthly basis and have begun to include Social Justice Story Hour for students.

Our principal has been a presenter at the Ethnography Forum at the University of Pennsylvania where she spoke on the subject of talking to students about issues involving race. She has been a guest lecturer at Penn regarding best practices for creating safe spaces for LGBTQ youth. She is launching a collaboration with Penn and GLSEN to support a network of LGBTQ educators in the greater Philadelphia area. This collaborative will focus on best practices for creating safe and welcoming schools for all students regardless of identity. Our principal is passionate about sharing best practices with the Philadelphia teaching community in dealing with race, class and gender. This passion has become infectious for our school community and has been embraced by staff members. Students and families often show up at these types of events to share support for the mission at Meredith to create safe spaces for all children.

The school has also fostered relationships with organizations like SREHUP, a shelter for homeless men, and Need in Deed. Both of these partnerships afford students the opportunity to conduct service learning for the greater good of their community. Additionally, our team has organized fundraisers for charities like Pennies for Patients and Hunter Syndrome. These causes were especially chosen because they affected teachers in our school community. Our student government learns how to organize and implement fundraisers for others which provide them great lessons in philanthropy and community collaboration.

As an avid supporter of fitness and healthy eating, our principal has led our school's initiative to create a 5k that invites families and community members to join in a healthy, mindful day of fun. Our school received a \$50,000 grant from the Vetri Community Partnership. The mobile teaching kitchen will visit our school throughout the year and provide our students with hands-on cooking classes that will teach them how to prepare healthy meals for their families. They will also set up a farm stand for our families where they can purchase organic, locally sourced produce.

Additionally, our leadership team instituted a Family Literacy Night last year to educate parents and caregivers on how to best support readers in the home. This has blossomed into a Saturday Symposium where school staff lead workshops for parents/caregivers in all academic areas, including social justice and wellness. Our principal has sponsored two teaching interns from Italy through a partnership with the Italian Consulate. This initiative has brought the teaching of Italian culture and language to students in the lower grades.

3. Professional Development:

At Meredith we believe that schools must be places of growth for not only children but also adults. We believe that principals play a central role in supporting transformative teacher learning. Teacher learning is not just compiling facts and best practices, knowledge, and skills; it is a process of transformation. When the appropriate supports are in place, the teachers are able to grow through reflection of their practice and careful review of their own assumptions. The principal is tasked with taking an inventory of staff needs and challenges them to participate in peer to peer engagement and professional development that helps them grow.

The Insight survey and school district survey data resulted in grade group meetings driven by teachers around areas of their classroom needs. The school district has a set professional development calendar that revolves around issues of curriculum, assessment, and implementation of the early literacy initiative. Student data guides our school based implementation of what we learn through these respective trainings.

In our estimation, an effective leader believes in the importance of ongoing, transformative adult learning. An effective leader knows her teachers as individuals, and thus is able to facilitate learning experiences that help them grow. What an effective leader does is provide time and structure for teachers to team, mentor, gain leadership experience, and critically reflect and inquire together. Our school is focused on empowering our staff to provide professional development to their peers. An example of this is that every summer, a core of our literacy teachers attends the Teachers' College Reading and Writing Project summer institutes at Columbia University to learn new and enhanced existing strategies in the areas of Readers and Writers Workshop. In the academic year following, these teachers conduct professional development to transfer the new ideas to the staff as a whole.

We also have a math lead teacher who provides coaching for teachers with partnerships through OGAP and Carnegie Learning. Our literacy lead teacher coaches teachers in the areas of guided reading, literacy environment, Reader's and Writer's Workshop. This is done in partnership with Children's Literacy Initiative. The idea is that the coaches receive coaching in how to effectively coach teachers through these partnerships.

Additionally, the school leadership consistently provides professional development focused on team-building with activities that would be transferable to students in the classroom. Most recently we were tasked with building a tower out of straws with our peers. Through this activity we learned about our leadership styles and the power of collaboration.

We also have engaged in race identity workshops with the University of Pennsylvania professor Ali Michaels. While at our school she led us through affinity group work that strengthened our own identify so we could better serve our students who were different than us.

4. School Leadership:

There are many layers to the leadership capacity at the William M. Meredith school. Our administrative leadership team consists of the principal, our school counselor, school psychologist, a school based teacher leader who specializes in math, and a school based teacher leader who specializes in early literacy. We also have a building committee that is comprised of six teachers, our school secretary, and a teaching assistant that communicates regularly with the principal to facilitate a positive work environment for the teachers and students. Our collective work is guided by our mission and common belief that collaboration will allow us to accomplish tasks needed to seamlessly weave together the type of school that we needed when we were students.

We believe that cultivating leaders in our schools benefits the organization as much as the individual. Our teaching staff takes on many different leadership roles. We have an extended leadership team comprised of staff who have shared an interest in taking on more responsibilities. We have many different committees headed by teachers that manage efforts that pertain to our science fair, cultural programming, arts initiatives, and peer to peer mentoring. We have a math lead and literacy lead who coach teachers, provide professional development and spearhead innovative programming.

We have many parents in positions of leadership from our School Advisory Council and Home and School Association to our parents who participate in our site selection committee and support us in choosing teachers to hire. We have parents who support our teachers in preparing for different events like our 5k and our school's annual auction. Parents have an opportunity to weigh in on the budget, academic and extracurricular programming, and family engagement activities.

Every Monday morning our administrative leadership team meets to review the scope of activities for the week, review the most recent attendance data for response to intervention work, design schedules for any coverages that are needed during grade group meetings and committee based PLCs, and create a checklist of administrative items that need to be addressed before we wrap up the week with our extended leadership meeting that is open to all teachers and staff.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The single most important strategy that we cultivate and support at the William M. Meredith School is the creation of an unusually high level of relational trust. Creating an educational community of trust impacts every single relationship that is developed inside of the school community. The impact of trust filters into every fiber of the school's reach. This has a direct effect on the teachers, parents, and ultimately student wellbeing and success.

Trust allows teachers the space to effectively improve their professional capacity. Without trust, the distribution of leadership cannot occur. Trust allows our teachers to feel valued and improves the teacher retention rates at our school. Our staff often proclaims that Meredith is the place that teachers want to build a whole career around. Once an effective teacher has been hired, we work hard to give them opportunities to feel like they are an integral part of the school. If we did not do this, teachers would feel isolated and meet the fate of many teachers nationwide; a desire for a new career. Instead our teachers build trusting relationships with our leadership team and their peers that encourages them to do the work needed to grow into the best teachers they can be. This trust creates a teaching force that models positivity and collaboration for our students.

Trust allows our teachers to let go of the wheel and let students be the center of the classroom. The teacher can identify and respond to difficulties that a child is experiencing when this type of relationship is established. You cannot teach children until you have established a relationship of trust with them. Once this relationship is developed the teacher has access to a child that is open to feedback, willing to work hard, and sees value in themselves in relation to their individual achievement.

Trust allows our parents to have strong ties to the school community. This becomes the network that propels students forward. Research is clear that parent involvement, buy in, and support has a huge correlation to positive student outcomes. This also has led to parents sharing family concerns with our team. Instead of hiding concerns from the school, we have an environment where parents come to us trusting that we will have their child's best interests in mind. Focusing our leadership on the development of trust ensures that teachers, students, and parents share an investment in the student's wellbeing and investment in the school's desire to improve.