

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. 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, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 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.
3. 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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 (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
 - 12 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 4 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 3 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools

19 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
 - Urban or large central city
 - Suburban
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	43	34	77
1	37	24	61
2	35	26	61
3	35	34	69
4	34	26	60
5	39	31	70
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	223	175	398

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 8 % Asian
 - 17 % Black or African American
 - 57 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 15 % White
 - 3 % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: 16%

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

Over the last few years, Norwalk has been evolving into a district with increased school choice. Several magnet programs and schools have been expanded offering more options at more grade levels. This flexibility for families has increased the mobility rate throughout the district.

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, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	30
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	28
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	58
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	373
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.16
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	16

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 26 %
105 Total number ELL

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

Arabic, Bengali, Creole-Haitian, French, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Mandarin, Filipino (Filipino), Polish, Russian, Sinhala, Spanish, Ukrainian

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 73 %
Total number students who qualify: 289

8. Students receiving special education services: 17 %
66 Total number of students served

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

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>8</u> Autism | <u>10</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>14</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>2</u> Developmental Delay | <u>1</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>6</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>24</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</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: 4
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	19
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	11
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	15
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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

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

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	95%	96%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2018.

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.

Tracey is an environment centered on providing all students with the growth mindset, educational skill-set, and moral character to make a difference in the world.

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

Tracey Elementary School is one of twelve elementary schools in Norwalk, Connecticut. Norwalk is an incredibly diverse community with 64 languages spoken by the more than 11,500 students that attend school in Norwalk. The diversity of Norwalk is not only represented in the languages spoken, but also in the demographic makeup and socioeconomic variances that can be observed in our schools as well. Half of the elementary schools in Norwalk are designated as Title 1 schools.

Tracey is a Title 1 school and has a population of 398 students with 72.61% receiving free/reduced lunch. Tracey has a large ELL population with 26.38% of students qualifying for services, while more than 70% of our students speak a second language at home. At Tracey, our diversity is a source of great pride.

In 2016, Tracey Elementary School was one of the lowest performing schools in Norwalk. We began to develop a plan to improve our school image and make tangible gains for our students. Our new principal realized that in order to meet the needs of all students, we needed a focus that everyone could be part of and support. Based on the needs of our students and families, we decided to become a character education-themed school.

As a staff, we immersed ourselves in learning about whole-child education. We leveraged the knowledge of staff members who had expertise in behavioral reshaping, and we redefined our role as educators. We began to look at everything we do through a lens that prioritized students' social and emotional needs.

Members of the Tracey community were asked to agree on a set of core values that encompassed both ethical and performance values. We created a memorable acronym to represent our values, PRINT, representing Problem-solving, Respect, Integrity, Neighborly, and Take Responsibility. We wanted our students to feel compelled to work hard while striving to be the kind of scholars who will make the world a better place.

Once our values were chosen, a staff member drafted a pledge using our core values and behavioral expectations. Our Tracey pledge is said daily at the opening of our school day and the core values are discussed in each class meeting. We have weekly community meetings that are presented and run by students.

We discovered Character.org, which had developed The 11 Principles of Effective Character Education. We began to use the principles to guide our character education development.

Each certified staff member chose one of three teams to become involved in:

The School Beautification Team worked to ensure that student artwork was prominently displayed around the school, planned projects such as redecorating staff bathrooms, and organized fall and spring plantings to make sure our school looked and felt like a well cared for home for students.

The Data Analysis Team worked as a traditional data team that identified trends in school data, and suggested action steps and Tier 1 instructional shifts to improve practice.

The Character Education Team worked to develop and share resources and activities that could help teachers teach our school core values. One of the major tasks this group took on was the collection of data around our school character program.

Teachers meet weekly in grade-level meetings that center around instruction in math, literacy, data analysis and planning. Staff work collaboratively on grade-level teams which include our ELL and Special Ed teachers as key partners in planning instruction to meet the needs of all learners.

Tracey identified parent involvement and community engagement as an area in need of improvement. We hired a bilingual parent coordinator and began a process of recruiting new parents at social gatherings like

kindergarten orientation and PTO events. The formation of a School Governance Council (SGC) had a profound effect on parent engagement, and helped establish rapport and trust between the staff and families. Through SGC meetings, both parents and staff began to understand the difficulties of changing a school culture. The challenge united our team to want to succeed.

Norwalk uses a Student Based Budgeting (SBB) process, which allows schools to allocate funds to areas of need. Using data as a guide, our administrative team identified science and math as areas where we needed to improve Tier 1 instruction. Using SBB, we were able to fund a math & science instructional coach to provide job-embedded professional development for teachers. The practice of having a thought partner for teachers has helped nurture a culture of self-reflection and collaboration.

Students who are in need of academic intervention are seen in small, flexible groups by classroom teachers and knowledgeable reading and math interventionists. These students are progress monitored regularly and new focus areas are selected. Students are regrouped every six weeks.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

Students at Tracey receive a balanced approach in literacy. We support the workshop model for instruction, one that includes a responsive approach to the teaching of both reading and writing, as well as communicating and speaking. Students need opportunities to integrate skills so they can strategize with automaticity and fluidity, while engaging in sustained reading and writing. Norwalk Public Schools has developed curriculum maps that are standard based. Common Core State Standards allow teachers to focus on instructional techniques to meet rigorous literacy needs across the curriculum. We use these maps to guide our lessons objectives. Content is what we teach, but there is also the how, and this is where our intentional instructional practice has been developed. We follow the workshop model to allow students substantial time to practice the skills taught. The goal of literacy instruction is to build students' comprehension, writing skills, and overall skills in communication. We use weekly PLC times to collaborate and plan within grade level teams. Norwalk Public Schools has focused districtwide PD on the teaching of writing: teachers writing side-by-side with students, and creating time on a regular basis in the classroom for writer's workshop that follows process that puts the writer in charge of content, voice, and structure. Using SIOP training, teachers use scaffolding in teaching reading by using effective strategies for pre-, during, and after reading, such as previewing text, reading for a purpose, making predictions and connections, think alouds, and using graphic organizers, anchor charts and visuals that support all our students, and not just struggling readers and English learners. We aim to inspire both a love for reading and writing, and to build stamina in our students. Teachers use benchmark data and progress monitoring assessments to target instruction. Small group enrichment and intervention groups are created based on data analysis.

1b. Mathematics:

Tracey's mathematics curriculum is grounded in a real-world approach through the lens of problem-solving. We are firmly grounded in the CPA (Concrete-Pictorial-Abstract) approach in teaching mathematics, as all students first need to approach concepts through concrete experiences with math manipulatives, to help pave the way for the representational and abstract understandings of complex concepts. Students connect to their prior knowledge, serving as the foundation on which we as professionals build on.

Tracey students and staff use the mathematical practices in their daily math lessons. Students are responsible for making their thinking visible. This allows for a student-centered approach, as students discuss strategies and models, and critique the work of others in safe and math-friendly environments. All ideas and thoughts are validated and are seen as important in the journey of learning mathematical reasoning. Teachers use mathematical pacing guides to drive instruction and a variety of resources to execute well developed, purposeful and rigorous lessons that meet the standards. Teachers approach the standards through inquiry, allowing students to discover and make sense of content. This allows teachers to take the role of facilitator, navigating students through the curriculum with purpose and planned intentionality.

Teachers have a 60-minute explicit instructional block for general math instruction, with a 30-minute intervention block. The use of math menus during intervention allows teachers to pull small groups for focused instruction geared at closing identified instructional gaps within the classroom and at each grade level. This allows differentiation to occur on all levels, as all students needs are met.

Teachers use NWEA, instructional screeners, unit assessments, grade- level benchmarks, and dipstick assessments to adjust whole-group and instructional numeracy groups. During PLCs, grade-level meetings and instructional coaching sessions, professionals develop flexible grouping within and outside the classroom to meet the instructional needs of our students.

1c. Science:

Science curriculum units have been established to provide a platform for teachers to meet NGSS. Through an inquiry approach, students begin to make sense of the world around them, as the content is connected to current and real-world situations that directly relate to the students and staff of Tracey. Tracey has found that when students connect to a purpose that they are passionate about, they are intrinsically motivated and meet any challenge head-on. Staff and students see science and engineering as a process rather than a product, generated through the discovery process.

Educators follow the 5 E (engage, explore, explain, elaborate, evaluate) model for planning and instruction. Science and Engineering practices are consistently ingrained in instruction to guide students through problem-based learning experiences. Educators use “talk moves” to place student discourse at the center of all instructional approaches, allowing students to have ownership of their own learning through facilitated learning paths. Science notebooks are seen as a purposeful practice by staff and students. Notebooks allow students to document their learning path, while providing teachers an opportunity to provide differentiation and assess students’ understanding prior to, during and after instruction.

Core curriculum contains an array of options for students to express their learning at the conclusion of a unit of study. Students can use technology, presentations, as well as other modalities to present their understanding to their peers. These summative assessments are celebrated and seen as a culminating achievement by both staff and students. Teachers use formative assessment probes to gauge both misconceptions and prior knowledge before moving into new content. This allows students to express their current understanding, providing an opportunity for teachers and coaches to plan for instruction at PLCs, grade-level meetings and coaching sessions, fostering purposeful discourse around instruction.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

Our social studies curriculum is aligned to the CCSS. Literacy units of study are integrated with our social studies standards. Students are using non-fiction text, mentor read alouds, responding to questions, writing about reading and using a multitude of comprehension strategies throughout lessons. Instruction embeds research and student discourse about important lessons on civics and society. We use our specials (character ed, art and music) to integrate units of study and complete projects that demonstrate learning. Social studies-related texts are used in our non-fiction literacy units throughout the year. Read alouds are also used to supplement and drive social studies curriculum. Daily class meetings include calendar, news, or sharing time to discuss the day in history and/or current events.

1e. For secondary schools:

1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Arts

Our art instruction is a combination of affective objectives, which are aimed at shaping the attitudes of students about art, and performance objectives that are skill based and taught through different techniques and media. The art program is taught using various methods and allow students to develop freedom of expression.

Our art teacher collaborates with classroom teachers on projects that help students demonstrate their understanding of curriculum objectives. For example, the art teacher does a co-taught unit with 4th grade students that has students explore the properties of geometric shapes in the construction of modern structures and structures from long ago. This unit involves students mastering the vocabulary of geometric shapes, perspective drawing to create two-dimensional sketches, and then studying the properties of different shapes to test the theory of which shape is the strongest to build with and why. This unit is engaging and also has a

real world component.

Student artwork is proudly displayed around the building along with an explanation of student learning. Tracey's hallways are an evolving art gallery for our community.

Physical education

Our physical education curriculum is rooted in healthy and balanced living. Students focus on motor skills, applying concepts and strategies as well as learning about the benefits of physical activity. Working in unison with our character education theme, the physical education curriculum also emphasizes responsible behavior and a philosophy of promoting an environment that is safe, physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually.

Kindergarten through fifth grade students learn to work collaboratively with one another through team-based challenges. Physical education is also aligned to the general education curriculum as content standards in literacy and numeracy are addressed at specific grade levels when appropriate. For example, our kindergarten students work on counting and cardinality during gym class throughout the year. First Grade students work on sight word recognition, forming cross curriculum ties between physical education and core curriculum content.

Communication between staff allows specific instructional practices to be incorporated into physical education and monitored and tracked through performance-based screeners and benchmarks assessments. Aligning core curriculum to physical education is decided through instructional leadership decisions and SLOs at grade level meetings and PLCs. This reinforces the content and allows the opportunity for real-world connections to be made while collecting informative data.

Technology & Media

Students at Tracey have one-to-one technology at grades 3 through 5, and have tech bin sets at the lower grades. With the aid of smartboards and touch TVs, teachers are able to incorporate the use of technology in core curriculum areas when appropriate, integrating technology into daily practices. Students are able to use technology to access digital resources for whole-group and individual focuses in all major content areas. Inquiring minds are celebrated through technology, as students explore concepts, research and critique the reasoning of others in a safe, purposeful and respectful environment.

Students at Tracey have library media once a week. They are able to select books of interest and listen to read alouds that have been aligned to school-wide initiatives and grade-level focus areas. Students discuss story elements, themes and opinions of text read aloud in an open dialogue between students and the library media specialist. Open dialogue is encouraged and modelled to help facilitate productive discourse and a purposeful discussion.

PRINT

As a co-taught special, Tracey has a service learning teacher who partners with grade levels to give students the ability to combine learning objectives with community service opportunities. Each grade level completed several service learning projects, ranging from working with nursing homes to engaging in a history of Norwalk through a pen-pal experience. Students also helped reduce our carbon footprint by lobbying to have a dishwasher installed so Tracey could introduce reusable trays and utensils. Our character education program at Tracey teaches our students to care about and act on core ethical values as well as teaching responsibility for themselves and others. Linking our culture with our innovative project-based learning philosophy, our students encounter hands on lessons that enhance their critical lens, self-worth, leadership ability and emotional social intelligence.

3. Special Populations:

We have several groups of special population students and we are charged with making sure each and every one of our students meets with their individual kind of success. The mindset shift that our whole-child learning has brought to staff has had a substantial impact on our definition of students reaching their goal.

Tracey embraces a continual growth model which means that we expect all our students to grow. Students

have individual conferences with teachers to discuss where they are and are challenged to create a growth target for themselves. For our youngest students, the conference takes the form of students knowing what they are working on. For example if you ask a kindergartener what they are working on they may respond with, "I am working on my teen numbers, especially 17 sometimes I confuse it with 70." Students are active partners in their learning experience.

As Tracey has a large population of ELL students, staff has been trained to use the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model. Most of the SIOP strategies are appropriate and beneficial for all our students. It involves helping to anchor students in their learning by giving students visual cues to help them make new connections.

Tracey is also home to two districtwide special classrooms for students who require a more intensive behavioral program. These classrooms require added resources and support, with a primary focus on behavior modification and then academically as a secondary concern. Until students are regulated they are not ready to receive academic support. The school has a history of success in preparing students from these classrooms to move into general education settings.

Last year, Norwalk evaluated its gifted and talented program and discovered disparities in the selection process. Tracey was selected to pilot a Schoolwide Enrichment Model for the district, which along with changes to the identification process, has allowed for a broader definition of "giftedness." The change has enabled equal access for our diverse group of students, helping more to thrive academically as well a social and emotionally.

As part of the Schoolwide Enrichment Model, Tracey cycles through Enrichment Clusters, which has been transformative for building relationships with peers in different grade levels, as well as with staff members who students may not normally interact with. During Clusters, students sign up for a 6-8 week club that explores a topic they elect. This provides all students with a small group, interest-based experience similar to what is typically reserved for only gifted students.

In math, we have a gap of over 10 points. After analyzing the issue, we identified that classroom teachers have struggled to remediate in math, because we lacked a tool that could pinpoint the areas of need in order to provide targeted instruction. We have since purchased a system that can be used to identify the most appropriate instructional focus for students. We also shifted our building interventionist to service students in math.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The positive culture and climate at Tracey are evident from the moment you pull into the parking lot. For morning drop off, there are two enthusiastic staff members opening the car doors for families and greeting students as they enter. If you are a walker, then you enter the front steps and are greeted by the school security guard with a big smile and an inquiry about how you are doing. Along the hallways, Tracey Cub Ambassadors (Fifth Grade volunteers) greet students. Fifteen minutes before the start of the morning announcements, piano pop tunes play softly through the intercom system while students grab their breakfast and head to class for breakfast in the classroom.

Each part of our day is strategically designed to reinforce the caring and nurturing environment that we feel is essential for student success.

Our family atmosphere along with the reassurance that each student is respected contributes greatly to the success of our students. Students are willing to take responsibility if they are behaving in a way that does not agree with our stated values. Each and every room reinforces that a bad choice is just that, a bad choice. Next time, a student can make a better choice. By taking away the fear of rejection if a mistake is made, students are more willing to be risk takers and persevere when a task is difficult.

The same intentionality of practice is used with staff by administration. Although it is essential that staff be evaluated, at Tracey, the evaluation process is used as a tool to help teachers succeed. Administrators will identify an area of concern in a lesson, provide feedback and return at a later time to assess if the educator applied the feedback to her practice. The hallways and office are filled with laughter and good natured sharing of home and school experiences.

The staff is grouped into collaborative teams of educators who work together to create lessons, problem solve when students are struggling, and support one another during the good and bad times.

Staff has brainstormed ways to be more connected to our families. Each year, student performance has improved, we believe in direct relation to the efforts being made to create a true school of character. This is not to say that there are not hardships or misbehavior taking place, but the difference in the level of accountability during problem-solving conversations has shown a marked improvement.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Tracey creates a safe and welcoming environment for parents from the moment they walk in the door. The school secretary, security guard, principal, and social worker are all fluent in Spanish. This is essential to make Hispanic parents feel comfortable in our school and feel heard as they are the largest population at Tracey. Parents are involved actively in the character education initiative through the School Governance Council, which includes seven parents, five teachers and the principal. All members are elected to two-year terms. Through the SGC, parent voices are heard and shared with the PTA.

The school's core values are found on weekly newsletters to parents and pamphlets available in the office. Newsletters are produced in both English and Spanish to ensure that parents are kept up-to-date with happenings in the school. The newsletter also keeps families informed about upcoming events to ensure maximum participation. The school website has information that is easily accessed by families. Parents are invited to weekly community meetings where individual classes present on an aspect of our values. All of these activities have provided parents with information regarding the core values that are taught to their children during the school day. To further involve parents in the character education initiative we hold Family PRINT nights where parents investigate the different aspects of our PRINT alongside their children. To inform new parents about our character education initiative along with our educational philosophy, a video is on the school website.

To maximize parental involvement during the school day, we have established an active list of volunteers who come into the school to assist in classes, with an emphasis on our youngest students. This allows parents to become involved with our character education initiative in a direct way. Our character education theme has been noted by the community, with stores such as Walmart and Old Navy contacting us to donate goods and supplies to our school.

We have also partnered with a local community center, The Carver Foundation, to provide after-school programming to support our Fifth Grade students. Enrichment activities are supported by the community with volunteers from Factset, a local company, and the Norwalk Maritime Aquarium to provide students with experiences such as coding and fish dissecting. Students who are in need of a mentor have them provided and meet with their mentors weekly.

This year, our Summer Academy at Tracey is part of the Springboard program. Springboard builds the requisite mindsets and skill sets for a school to take on culture change. Springboard has the framework for sustaining and operationalizing effective parent-teacher collaboration. Through the pilot initiative, Springboard trains staff to implement home visits, parent-teacher goal setting, family workshops, and report card conferences that can and will be led by students where appropriate.

3. Professional Development:

Norwalk Public Schools provides professional development opportunities that focus on district initiatives to impact all schools within Norwalk. Recent PD has focused on diversity and cultural sensitivity, the SIOP model, Writing Process/CES, Hill for literacy and NGSS.

However, each school is allowed to collaboratively formulate their own site-based professional development opportunities to fit within their own school and staff goals. Tracey's individual PD plan is created at the beginning of each school year to help achieve our school's vision and initiatives determined by school-based leaders. Tracey has used this opportunity to provide opportunities that are tailored to the needs of the students, staff, and community of Tracey Elementary.

Tracey's PD has focused a great deal around character education, as we believe that we need to educate the entire child. Tracey was initially receiving outside professional development on character education, but soon realized that the best approach was homegrown PD created by the leadership committees within Tracey. Staff worked collaboratively to educate one another around "The 11 Principles of Effective Character Education." Professional days, staff meetings and PLCs helped build ongoing professional development to help establish our character education curriculum and practices at Tracey. This work is ongoing and is ingrained into the very culture of our school.

In house instructional coaching has provided an opportunity for job-embedded professional development to flourish. Through PLCs, staff meetings and instructional coaching rounds, staff continues to be provided immense opportunities to grow professionally around their own goals, as well as the goals identified by the instructional leadership team of Tracey. All staff receives the opportunity for ongoing professional opportunities. Each department within Tracey receives individualized professional development, based on their roles and the instructional needs of the school, observed through data meetings and assessments.

Our Math and Science instructional coach models lessons, pushes into classes, and completes instructional coaching cycles centered around classroom management, planning, instruction, and assessment. This has helped create a culture that has a growth mindset, and fosters collaboration, reflection and collegiality amongst all staff. Teachers refer to each other for support and ideas and see each other as professional resources.

At Tracey, our entire staff believes that ongoing professional development is key to developing ourselves as professionals. We have recognized that educators need to continue to learn just like the students do. This has allowed a growth mindset to root itself at the very core of our philosophy.

4. School Leadership:

The style of leadership at Tracey can best be described as collaborative, multi-tiered and connected. The Tracey leadership team operates primarily under the philosophy of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. We believe that each individual our community touches has basic, physiological and self-fulfillment needs. We also believe that it is our role as leaders to support all staff, students and families in meeting those needs. The first question in the leader's decision tree is always, "Is this something that will be good for our students?" If the answer is no, the request is not considered further. The second consideration is, "Does the request honor the core values we have selected as a school?"

School administration leverages the talents, dispositions and knowledge of the Tracey community to achieve success for all students. Although there are two administrators in the building, the leadership team is composed of administration, coaches, classroom teachers, support staff and dedicated parents. Tracey administration is transparent about what is expected and sets high expectations for all. The tools to meet those expectations are provided and support is given freely.

All staff are divided into school level teams with each person selecting an area that they feel strongly about supporting. Staff leadership is an expectation at Tracey. It encourages staff to be a part of the solution. This helps to create an environment where most changes are made in conjunction with staff, rather than being done to staff.

Staff has been empowered to step into leadership roles when they have something they would like to work on. It is not uncommon for staff to take the lead on school or community projects. For example, our Science and Math coach asked to create a science lab in a room that had been a storage closet. The coach stayed late after school and came into the building on weekends to work on creating a space that has become a uniquely inspiring place to learn and engage in the practice of science. Other teachers volunteer to lead our summer school, after-school enrichment programs and participate on our School Governance Council (SGC)

Staff members are elected by their peers to be a part of our SGC, where they work side-by-side with parents as the governing body of our school. They are empowered to approve our school's budget and make policy based on the analysis of our school data.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The strategy that has been the most impactful for us as a school has been the explicit focus that we have placed on social emotional learning. This focus has touched each and every student, family and staff member of our community. A major component of this work is our weekly community meeting. Every Friday, the entire school comes together to watch and participate in a 30 minute, student-led presentation that reflects one of our core values. These presentations are often interactive. Many speaking and listening standards are addressed as students learn to express their opinions, and to listen and respond to texts shared and questions posed.

At the beginning of the year, teachers look at the schedule of available dates and sign up for one or two Fridays that fit into what they feel will work best with their continuum of learning. Some teachers sign up to be closer to a holiday that they feel they will be able to connect with, like Veterans Day, while others center their choices on what curriculum will be taught at that point of the year.

The community meeting not only reinforces the values that we share as a school, but also deepens the ties that we have to each other as members of the same school family. When students watch their peers perform skits, read poetry or sing songs, they are respectful of the effort that goes into the performance and empathetic when something doesn't go as planned. When a student stands up and gives the signal for everyone to quiet down, it gives them a sense of acceptance and confidence when all students honor our code of conduct. Each student in the building has an opportunity to present to our Tracey family at some point in the year.

The students at Tracey are overall more confident in their ability to lead discussions and share ideas as a result of these community meetings.