

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Holly M. Searl

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

Official School Name John W. Ross Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1730 R Street NW

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

Washington DC 20009-2410  
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County United States

Telephone (202) 673-7200

Fax (202) 673-6644

Web site/URL http://www.rosselementary.org

E-mail holly.searl@k12.dc.gov

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Dr. Lewis Ferebee

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail lewis.ferebee@k12.dc.gov

District Name District of Columbia Public Schools Tel. (202) 442-5885

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Ms. Ruth Wattenberg

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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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. 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

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

- Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
  - 79 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 13 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 22 High schools
  - 2 K-12 schools

116 TOTAL

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

- Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
  - Urban or large central city
  - Suburban
  - Rural or small city/town
- 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	18	17	35
K	13	13	26
1	11	20	31
2	10	18	28
3	7	18	25
4	12	12	24
5	9	12	21
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
<b>Total Students</b>	80	110	190

\*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
  - 9 % Asian
  - 17 % Black or African American
  - 18 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 48 % White
  - 8 % 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: 12%

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

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	11
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	21
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	174
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.12
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	12

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 18 %  
34 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Spanish, Tamil, Telugu, Portuguese, Russian, German, Italian, Bengali, Romanian, French, Tigrinya, Amharic, Kyrgyz, Turkish, Albanian, Thai, Chinese, Japanese, Bangla, Malayalam, Kazakh

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 6 %  
Total number students who qualify: 12

8. Students receiving special education services: 7 %  
13 Total number of students served

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

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>1</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>4</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>3</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>3</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>0</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: 9
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	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	8
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
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 24:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	96%	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.

<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.

"Embraced for who you are and Empowered to be more." Every child is known. Every teacher is invested. Every family is valued.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

All District of Columbia Public Schools are part of the [www.MySchoolDC.org](http://www.MySchoolDC.org) city-wide lottery process. All Kindergarten through Grade 5 students who live within the Ross boundary have a right to attend the school. Students who reside outside of the boundary may enter the MySchoolDC city-wide lottery for admission.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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Ross Elementary School is located in the historic Dupont Circle neighborhood and is the smallest public school in the District of Columbia. Our school serves 190 students in prekindergarten through fifth grade, with one class per grade level. We are proud of our diversity, close-knit community, history of family engagement, and strong academic performance. As parents and staff are fond of saying, we are a little school with a big personality.

Ross is named after John W. Ross, who served as postmaster of Washington, D.C. and President of the D.C. Board of School Trustees. Built in 1888 in the redbrick box design typical of the late nineteenth century, the school has only eight classrooms. Today it is lovingly referred to as the dollhouse due to its intimate size and feel.

Our surrounding neighborhood, Dupont Circle, is a vibrant, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood. Historic row houses, apartment buildings, restaurants, and local business are found side-by-side. Dupont Circle is also home to numerous embassies, and it is the historic hub of D.C.'s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning (LBGTQ) community, hosting the annual Pride Parade.

The Ross community reflects the diversity of its neighborhood. Our students and families represent many countries, speak many languages, and come from diverse family structures. We embrace this richness of culture and invite families to share their traditions, whether it is a class presentation on the Lunar New Year or a schoolwide celebration of the Indian spring festival of Holi.

Ross is a true neighborhood school, with most students walking or biking a few blocks to school. Our small size facilitates familiarity and engagement, which is exemplified by our community drop-off on the playground. Teachers and staff greet students by name, parents and teachers engage in informal conversations, and parents linger to talk amongst themselves. The entire community gathers multiple times per year for events such as the beginning and end-of-year potluck picnics, Literacy Night, Halloween “Spooktacular,” and family movie and bingo nights.

We embrace the Responsive Classroom philosophy and cultivate a positive school culture where students feel heard and have agency over their learning. Our traditions reflect this philosophy. At the beginning of the year, students collaborate to name their class (e.g., “The Heroic Hamsters” and “The Brilliant Betta Fish”) and set classroom expectations for the year. The school day begins and ends with student-led opening and closing meetings, and one class leads a multi-grade opening meeting each month. We host quarterly “Learning Celebrations,” where students proudly share projects and artifacts from their instructional units and host student-led conferences every May, where students reflect on their progress and set goals for future growth. All students participate in an annual STEM fair, and we send teams to the Math Bowl, Geo-Plunge, Spelling Bee and Battle of the Books.

We believe that every child can succeed, regardless of background. Our guiding principle is “Embraced for you are and empowered to be more. Every child is known. Every teacher is invested. Every family is valued.” Beginning in kindergarten, we engage in authentic and rigorous reading, writing, and math. Every student receives instruction at grade level or above, regardless of current ability. We are a data-driven institution and use small, flexible groups to provide additional, strategic support as needed. Teachers communicate regularly with parents to create a home-school partnership.

We are proud of our students’ consistent continued improvement on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), and we celebrate the absence of a racial achievement gap at Ross. Based on the 2019 PARCC performance for Ross, 82% of students scored at Level 4+ in Mathematics overall with White students scoring 86% and African American students scoring 86%. In English Language Arts, 89% of students scored at Level 4+ overall with white scoring 90% and African American scoring 86%.

Our dedicated and talented teachers share responsibility for all students, and are not defined by their title.

Our librarian provides small group literacy support, and our special education inclusion resource teacher co-teaches kindergarten math. We invest in our teachers by providing consistent job-embedded professional development and shared leadership opportunities. We meet weekly in professional seminars that are co-led by our Instructional Coach and teachers. Seminar content is informed by school data and teacher feedback and typically follows a six week cycle. The weekly seminar also includes time for collaborative planning across grade levels and time for debriefing non-evaluative weekly classroom observations.

We practice “joyful rigor,” believing that when students are happy and have opportunities for engaging arts and enrichment, they rise to the challenge of a rigorous core curriculum. We view the city as our classroom. Students take a field trip or host a guest speaker monthly, and we intentionally align enrichment and experiential learning with the curriculum. First graders visit the American History museum while studying American symbols, and fourth graders meet with a park ranger from the National Park Service in preparation for a White House visit. Students attend performing arts productions through our partnerships with the Kennedy Center and Imagination Stage, and participate weekly in the full array of fine and performing arts instruction at the Fillmore Arts Center.

Additionally, we promote our students’ physical growth through daily recess and physical education class twice per week. Units of study in physical education include nontraditional studies such as fly fishing, learning to bike, and archery. Our upper elementary students also participate in interscholastic sports in the fall and spring. We promote walking and biking to school through partnership with the District Department of Transportation Safe Routes to School.

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

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

#### **1a. Reading/English language arts:**

The Reading and English language arts curriculum is aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and informed by the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) grade level units of study. The rigorous demands of the CCSS align with our philosophy that all children should be exposed to on and above grade level texts with a balance of fiction and nonfiction. Our units marry literacy skills with authentic science and social studies content. Students read rich texts representing a variety of perspectives. Through close reading, research, field trips, writing, and hands-on projects, students build knowledge of themselves and the world around them. We strive to provide our children with opportunities to develop their identity as readers and writers, not by describing a discrete performance level but by describing what they can do and how to set goals to continually grow and improve. Students celebrate their ongoing progress as readers and writers with their families at quarterly Learning Celebrations.

Our goal is to teach all students at or above the grade level standard by differentiating in small groups. The DCPS strategic goal calls for all students to be reading at or above grade level by the time they enter Grade 2. At the end of last school year, 95% of our first graders met this goal. We universally screen all students a minimum of three times a year (beginning, middle and end of year) in grades K-5 using nationally normed DCPS required assessments that are administered personally to each student in K-2 and online for grades 3-5. The data are used to create initial small instructional groups for guided reading lessons, strategy groups in writing, differentiated groups for word study and additional phonics intervention. In addition to the universal screenings, teachers frequently observe and assess students in the guided reading groups using running records or comprehension prompts as well as analyze student writing based on vertically aligned rubrics informed by CCSS demands. A full time English/Language Arts (ELA) instructional coach and full time Response to Intervention (RTI) teacher regularly plan for structured reviews of the student data and coach teachers to build their capacity to address diverse learning needs. In addition to teacher-led direct instruction through differentiated grouping, we use technology-based supports for phonics intervention and additional exposure to grade level informational texts.

Based on 2018 PARCC, 46% of students scored Level 4 proficiency and 43% scored Level 5, exceeding expectations without a racial achievement gap.

#### **1b. Mathematics:**

Eureka! Math is the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) aligned curriculum adopted by DCPS and implemented with fidelity at Ross for students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Math is taught daily in 90 minute blocks. Prior to the system-wide adoption of Eureka!, Ross served as a pilot school sharing feedback and insight with the DCPS central office. The lesson sequence is consistent throughout the grades with an emphasis on conceptual development, application, and fluency and is closely aligned with the eight standards of mathematical practice.

We intentionally focus on mathematical discourse by providing students with ample opportunities to explain their thinking using precise math language and mathematical models with manipulatives or through drawing and labeling. Our math classrooms are buzzing with conversation as students work collaboratively to solve problems in multiple ways. Students work with partners and in small groups to practice lesson material, engage in small group instruction with teachers and use technology to advance their skills. Our curriculum is supplemented by adaptive blended learning programs to enrich and develop resilience with problem solving and to build fluency. Student progress on blended learning programs is monitored weekly by our STEM coordinator. Students who need extra time are invited to attend support sessions led by Ross staff before school.

Ongoing classroom assessments include teacher observation, daily exit tickets, topic quizzes and end-of-

module assessments. All students are universally screened three times a year as required by DCPS using the adaptive i-Ready assessment. Data are used to monitor student growth over time and to assist with creating flexible grouping for classroom instruction and intervention. Zearn is an online resource available to families to support the review and re-teaching of concepts. We collaborate with the DCPS central office math team to secure curricular materials and support for students working well above grade level. Based on the 2018 PARCC performance, 57% of students scored Level 4 proficiency and 25% scored Level 5 advanced. We budgeted for an Instructional Coach in Mathematics for the coming school year to support teachers with their planning for rigorous instruction to ensure continual student progress.

### **1c. Science:**

All classroom teachers are responsible for teaching science at Ross. Science units are based on the DC Science Standards aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) framework. We also incorporate CCSS literacy and math standards into instructional tasks. Students keep science journals, read widely from a range of texts and online materials from Discovery Techbook, record their findings and present evidence-based explanations orally and in writing. Instructional content includes earth and space sciences, life sciences and physical sciences with an emphasis on scientific thinking and inquiry. A full-time STEM coordinator supports classroom instruction through co-planning and co-teaching and brings professional expertise to build teacher capacity in the areas of design thinking, technological integration, and authentic investigations. For example, fifth graders are investigating a local environmental problem, the pollution of the Anacostia River, and researching and designing possible solutions. Student engagement and investment increases when they are empowered to apply design thinking to an authentic, local issue.

Units of study are supplemented by Engineering is Elementary (EIE) Units, participation with a Project Lead the Way (PLTW) grant, and a partnership with an organization that pairs practicing and retired scientists with our teachers for collaboration. These resources allow us to enhance hands-on experiences for children by problem solving with Vex kits, learning how to code, and engaging in design thinking to solve environmental challenges.

Our annual STEM Fair is unique because all projects are completed in class integrated with the grade level units of study. This model promotes equity ensuring a 100% student participation rate. Current and retired science professionals from the community judge the projects.

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

Ross implements the DCPS Social Studies curriculum which is inquiry based and emphasizes experiential learning. The curriculum is based on the District of Columbia Social Studies standards integrated with CCSS reading and writing standards.

Students read from diverse texts, with a focus on informational texts and articles, historical novels, and primary and secondary sources instead of a single, grade level textbook. Teachers implement close reading protocols to support students' access and comprehension of complex texts, providing students with opportunities to revisit a rich text multiple times. All students engage in discussion and debate using habits of discussion based on CCSS listening and speaking standards. Students learn to agree and disagree respectfully, add on to a peer's comments and ask clarifying questions. In grades 3-5 students produce persuasive or informative essays using document based evidence to support their thesis.

We take advantage of the museums, monuments and parks right outside our door to enrich our classroom instruction. All grades frequently participate in curriculum-related field trips. Examples include the National Archives, the American History Museum, The National Gallery of Art and Mount Vernon.

Fourth graders participate in the "Every Kid in a Park" program. Teachers collaborate with the U.S. Department of Interior to invite park rangers into the classroom to prepare for a visit to the White House. All 5th graders travel to Gettysburg to culminate their study of the Civil War and their creation of a classroom based Civil War Museum.

Student progress is assessed in multiple ways. We observe growth in oral language as students acquire more skill in debate and persuasion, we review student created projects and performances, we use a PARCC aligned rubric to score essays, and we observe student engagement and participation during experiential learning opportunities.

**1e. For secondary schools:**

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

We implement a research based curriculum, Creative Curriculum, in the early childhood education (ECE) program that addresses content areas of literacy, math, social studies and science and social emotional regulation. The early childhood curriculum also includes the full spectrum of art, music, physical education, Spanish, library, and social-emotional development that our K-5 students receive. Student growth is captured through the GOLD Teaching Strategies continuum of development. Teachers document progress through observation, interviews, and work sampling. We strive for tight alignment between the early childhood and K-5 curriculum with a special emphasis on phonemic awareness, phonics and emergent literacy as measured by concepts of print. The ECE team meets regularly with the Instructional Coach and the Academic Support teacher to review student progress and plan collaboratively. The goal is for every child entering kindergarten at Ross to know all alphabet letters and sounds and have a solid grasp of concepts of print such as book handling and directionality. Children who attend our ECE program frequently demonstrate a stronger command of early literacy skills than students entering Ross for the first time at the kindergarten level.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

All Ross students in PK through Grade 5 receive instruction in art, music, physical education and health, Spanish, library, and technology.

**Arts instruction**

Visual and Performing Arts is provided for all students through a partnership with the DCPS Fillmore Arts program where students spend a half day each week taking two hour-long classes. All K-2 students follow the same curriculum sequence, rotating through visual arts, music, dance and drama over the course of the year. Students in grades 3-5 choose classes from a wide variety of art areas and except for instrumental music, class offerings change each semester. Class offerings include drama, dance, band, strings, guitar, ukulele, digital arts, ceramics, drawing and painting, musical theatre and interrelated arts. In partnerships with the Kennedy Center and local theaters, classes receive opportunities to attend professional performances and curricular support by artists in residence including arts integration in the core content. For example, an opera singer partnered with our Spanish teacher to create an opera performance in Spanish for third graders.

We are proud to offer an annual musical theatre performance by our 4th and 5th grade students. The performance is supported by local theaters for expertise and use of the professional stage experience. We find that participation in the arts both as producers and consumers develops confidence in our children and research shows it positively influences the success in core academic areas as well.

**Physical Education/Health**

All students receive 90 minutes of Physical Education and Health instruction per week in addition to a minimum of 30 minutes of daily recess.

Ross employs a full-time Health and Physical Education (HPE) teacher who meets with every class twice a week to teach the DCPS HPE curriculum. In addition, the HPE teachers manages the daily recess periods for each grade level. Units of study include diverse offerings such as bike riding, fly fishing, cooperative games, and yoga. This year, our HPE teacher coached an archery team through the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) with the goal of participating in a city-wide tournament. Student progress is monitored and

assessed through focused observation, student explanation and exit tickets aligned to the unit objectives. The health curriculum includes standards addressing healthy choices, nutrition, human development and major systems of the body. Our annual Field Day has become a favorite tradition celebrating learning in HPE, promoting cooperation and a bit of healthy competition.

We offer interscholastic sports through the District of Columbia Interscholastic Athletic Association (DCIAA). All students in Grades 4 and 5 are eligible to participate in cross country in the fall and track and field in the spring. We also participate in a Ski program which teaches fifth graders to ski during a day long trip to a local ski resort.

#### Foreign Language

Spanish is offered three times a week for students in kindergarten through third grade and twice a week for fourth and fifth graders for 30 minutes each session, to increase proficiency beyond what a traditional one class per week schedule typically provides. Many Ross children are bilingual or multi-lingual and families embrace the fact that we provide world language at the elementary level.

The curriculum is content-based with an emphasis on reading, writing, listening and speaking as defined by the Pathways to Proficiency expectations as outlined by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language. The curriculum is customized by our Spanish teacher to align with the science and social studies units of study in each grade level. For example, if a class is studying animal adaptations in Science, their Spanish class will supplement that study. Students will learn to describe and classify animals in Latin American habitats and read legends related to those animals, all in Spanish. This method builds content vocabulary in both English and Spanish and is highly engaging for students. We created a “lunch bunch” for students who are native Spanish speakers after noticing they were not maintaining their Spanish language fluency or desire to speak to their parents in Spanish as they became more proficient in English. We are hopeful this affinity group will challenge heritage and native speakers while also helping students take pride in their cultural heritage and develop closer friendships across grade levels.

#### Library/Technology

Our library has a modified flexible schedule allowing each class to visit once a week for library instruction and book check out. The librarian supports classroom instruction by “pushing in” to classes to support content-based research in collaboration with the classroom teacher and by “pulling out” small groups for research support. In addition to weekly classes, students and families may visit the library to return and check out additional materials before and after school and during lunch and recess. The collection is vigilantly curated and weeded with the support of dedicated community volunteers and updated annually through an investment of approximately \$10,000 in books and materials. Monthly circulation is monitored and averages 555 books, with a trend toward non-fiction. The Librarian works closely with the local District of Columbia Public Library (DCPL) to ensure that 100% of Ross students have library cards.

Technology instruction is integrated into classroom instruction with the support of the Librarian and the STEM coach as requested. Students in PK4 through Grade 2 primarily use i-Pads for blended learning and technology integration. In grades 3-5, we strive for a 1:1 laptop program. Keyboarding is taught beginning in grade 2 and students in grades 3-5 use laptops daily to draft essays, conduct research and create presentations. For example, 4th graders created travel videos during their Native American study in social studies and 5th graders used the Maker’s Empire program and our 3-D printer to create molecular models in science class.

### **3. Special Populations:**

Our goal is to consistently provide high quality Tier 1 instruction to all students through a universal design for learning. Learning is differentiated through a strengths-based differentiation model. We are proud of our tradition of inclusive instruction and that our Response to Intervention (RTI) participation rates closely match the research-based figures of 10-15% of students in Tier 2 instruction and 3-5% in Tier 3.

We operate with the philosophy that early intervention is best, and assessments for special education should be administered following interventions. Special Education assessments are used as a tool to support the

team in determining eligibility and, more importantly, a tool to guide teachers in how to support the student individually through special education and within the general education classroom. All teachers are knowledgeable of assessment data to better support their students in the classroom. Of the 7 referrals made to special education this school year, one data review resulted in a placement of RTI, two resulted in successful 504 plans, three resulted in an Eligibility Determination, and only one resulted in a Non-eligibility Determination with placement into RTI (early intervention). Each student has demonstrated growth across all academic areas following the appropriate placements.

Ross utilizes a full-time inclusion teacher who provides additional support in a resource setting for students who require additional practice with foundational skills. The inclusion teacher provides special education services to students with IEPs, co-teaches kindergarten Math, supports Tier 2 and 3 interventions, and develops 504 plans for eligible students. Students with specialized instruction performed above the District average on the 2018 PARCC assessment.

We fund a full time RTI teacher leader who provides academic support in upper grades and manages the team of teachers responsible for providing interventions. Supplemental staffing is provided for small group instruction, and closely monitored through the RTI team. The team meets twice a month to discuss student progress, review data, and plan for Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction. RTI follows a 6-week cycle and updates families of student progress and supports in writing. We are proud of our strong RTI as it has helped closed the achievement gap.

We utilize the following tiered supports for our students performing below grade-level: Double dose of guided reading, strategy groups in reading, strategy groups in writing, small group mathematics, blended learning supports for phonics and math, one-on-one intervention, after school homework club, and ST Math morning club. Students working above grade level standards have access to rich, complex texts at advanced levels, middle school math curriculum, adaptive blended learning, open-ended rigorous writing opportunities, academic competitions (STEM Fair, Spelling Bee, Battle of the Books, Geoplunge), and problem-based STEM research opportunities.

Ross follows the philosophy that everyone is a teacher no matter the specific title and we share full responsibility for all students. Ross funds extra educational aides and academic support teachers for specific grade bands. The instructional coach provides professional development and coaching to support educational aids in the implementation of Words Their Way.

English Language Learners (ELLs) are supported through previewing complex texts, modified Reading Recovery, pull-out supports, double dose of guided reading, before and after school math supports, before school STEM lab and Library access. ELL supports are provided based on the student's English Language WIDA assessment score and progress monitoring throughout the school year.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Ross is known for having a strong culture and climate. The principal’s welcome letter on our website notes, “... the adults in our community work together to bear the equal weight and responsibility for ensuring that all of our children are well, not only as measured by academic achievement scores, but also as measured by the effectiveness of our social curriculum in developing kind and generous human beings.” Our mission and vision statements capture our commitment to building a strong, inclusive culture. At Ross, you are “Embraced for who you are and Empowered to be more.” Our vision states that, “Every child is known. Every teacher is invested, and Every family is valued.”

We have created a safe and peaceful environment for learning and visitors often comment on the “positive feel” and “happy feeling” of the building. We set the tone in our schoolhouse through intentional routines and structures that help create a positive culture. Families and students are greeted every morning by school staff and the Principal as they enter the building. Many students arrive before the official day begins for a “morning recess” on the field and playground and free breakfast in our Café. The opportunity for a healthy meal and physical activity sets students up for success and focus as they settle in to a morning of rigorous academics.

The Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum includes the Responsive Classroom approach as our schoolwide Tier 1 approach to cultivating a positive, welcoming climate and promoting student voice and ownership through the acronym C.A.R.E.S. which stands for cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy and self-control. Elements of Responsive Classroom include sharing the creation of classroom expectations and identifying logical, natural consequences with children. We begin each day with Morning Meeting and end with a Closing Meeting. These routines create community and time to reflect and appreciate one another. As the year progresses, students take on leadership roles with the Morning Meeting. In our two classrooms piloting the Peace of Mind (POM) curriculum, students have “Kindness Pals” and exchange positive messages and kind deeds with their identified partners. Our school psychologist helps match upper grade students with our early childhood classrooms to serve as class helpers.

Our monthly “floor-wide” community Morning Meetings are becoming a favorite tradition. Grade level classes take turns leading this monthly celebration, sharing favorite songs, greetings, and activities and acknowledging classmates’ birthdays. In addition to Responsive Classroom, Ross teachers have been instrumental in leading an expansion of our SEL work through active engagement in professional learning and by serving as leads for program pilots. Ross joined a small cohort of local public and private schools to pilot the “Peace of Mind” mindfulness curriculum last year with third grade and has expanded the work to include PK3 and PK4 this year. We analyze data from the Panorama SEL survey administered district-wide to students in Grades 3 and above to identify priorities for our work. Ross has a student satisfaction rate of 94% for students surveyed in Grades 3-5. Growth areas include: maintaining focus during instruction and developing resiliency when faced with a challenge. We have an SEL goal in our comprehensive school plan to address this data and we dedicate one teacher-led staff meeting a month to SEL professional development.

We focus on cultivating a growth mind-set for all members of the community by encouraging risk-taking and normalizing failure. This promotes a culture of continuous improvement. This work has led to Ross implementing Student Led Conferences at each grade level every Spring. We teach students reflective language to describe themselves as readers, writers and problem solvers throughout the year and help them create manageable, specific goals linked to their learning. Students are proud to lead their own learning conference with their parents and to demonstrate their growth over time.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Ross benefits from an engaged principal who is accessible and dedicated; teachers who go above and beyond for their students, who work tirelessly to educate our children; and an involved parent group and

community that works collaboratively in support of Ross staff and students.

We have an active and committed parent community, who enjoys many opportunities for school engagement and involvement in their children's academic and social emotional success at Ross. Opportunities for daily interactions and engagement include seeing leadership and teachers at drop-off each morning and at afternoon pick-up; through Parent Coffees, and volunteer efforts. Families learn about academic priorities and student progress at Back-to-School Nights, by receiving mid-advisory academic progress reports and quarterly report cards, attending three parent conference days per school year, and enjoying student's showcasing their work at quarterly Learning Celebrations. Weekly Principal Bulletins, as well as an accessible and website, function to keep our community well informed. Teachers also send weekly newsletters and use class photograph sharing apps to maintain classroom connections with the community.

Ross also has more formal structures for participation that include a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and a Local School Advisory Team (LSAT.) The PTA elects an executive board each year with the Principal serving as a non-voting member. The LSAT elects a board of parents and faculty members. The role of the LSAT is to advise the Principal on budget and programming with monthly meetings that are open to the school community. The LSAT also actively engages with the greater community such as the City Council and DCPS Central Office to advocate for school needs. The PTA fundraises to provide financial support for classroom materials, technology that supports and enhances the DCPS curriculum, professional development for teachers, partnerships throughout the District that allow for instructive and exciting field trips and parent education programs through a local vendor. The PTA also focuses on creating opportunities for inclusive community engagement among families at Ross and the DuPont Circle community at large, including a Back-to-School international potluck picnic, Movie night, Community Service Saturday, and Family Games Night.

At Ross, we celebrate a close, diverse, and welcoming community in a supportive learning environment that is friendly, challenging, and inspiring. There are many opportunities to share and value our families' diverse cultures such as families visiting their child's classroom to share their cultural traditions. Ross also proudly marches every year as part of the DCPS contingent in the Capital Pride Parade to celebrate our diverse school and to show support of our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersexual and Asexual (LGBTQIA+) community members.

Our little school feels like a family due in large part to the engagement and collaboration with both families and neighbors who support the success of our students.

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

Ross strives to attract and retain teaching talent by creating a learning focused environment for adults in our school. We believe in the power of consistent, job-embedded professional development as a critical lever to change learning outcomes for children.

We implement the professional development model the district created three years ago called LEAP, which stands for Learning Together to Advance Practice, with fidelity. The LEAP model includes content-focused instructional coaching with weekly non-evaluative observations and feedback for each teacher and a weekly 90 minute professional seminar that includes professional reading, data analysis, standards-based planning and looking at student work. Our current LEAP cycle is focused on planning for guided reading with the English Language Learner in mind. This topic was selected after a recent data review, classroom observations, and teacher survey indicated a need for greater professional development in this area. At Ross, our instructional planning in LEAP takes place in vertical teams. Vertical planning ensures that standards are being taught at the intended level of rigor for each grade level.

We believe in the power of teacher leadership at Ross and create opportunities for teachers to have a voice in shaping priorities and professional learning. INSIGHT survey data % lead something important. Our Academic Leadership Team Plus (ALT+) meets monthly and is open to all staff who wish to contribute to decision making and introduce new business or topics. It is through the ALT+ that teachers decided to

create a monthly "Learning Walk" protocol to ensure peer visits to classrooms. The ALT+ also creates surveys to collect data to inform our work and has facilitated book clubs for professional reading. We are proud that we have supported classroom teachers at Ross as they have grown into leadership roles at our school as instructional coaches and then moved on to district leadership positions such as assistant principal, principal and instructional superintendent.

In addition to the weekly job-embedded LEAP work and promoting teacher leadership, a third area of professional development is our interaction with the broader professional community. We support school-to-school networking, through peer visits and observations, engagement at local and national conferences, and membership in professional organizations.

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

Ross benefits from strong instructional leadership and an organizational model based on core values, norms, and systems and structures. Our Principal has served our community for nine years and has brought stability and consistency to the community. The DCPS core values of students first, equity, excellence, teamwork, courage and joy guide our priorities and decision-making. Our norms of being present (equity of voice and engagement), being solution-oriented (data driven, positive, growth mindset) and being committed (following through and holding one another accountable) guide our professional interactions. The systems and structures we have in place such as our approaches to teaching, our master schedule, master calendar and shared document drive, guide how we spend our time. Our values, norms and structures inform how we make budgeting decisions. Our Principal views attracting and retaining excellent teachers as one of her most important roles.

At Ross, teachers are leaders and lead the majority of the team-based structures that guide our work. Teams include the Academic Leadership Team (ALT), Response to Intervention Team (RTI), Academic Leadership Team Plus (ALT+), Learning Together to Advance Practice (LEAP), Safety and Security (SERT) and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). Following structures helps us to maintain consistency and traction with our priorities and develops professional discipline. The shared leadership means all teachers and specialists have an opportunity to develop leadership skills such as facilitating meetings and processes/protocols and learning to compromise with colleagues.

Teachers at Ross feel they have a voice with leadership regarding decision-making, professional development and having the opportunity to lead important work. The Insight survey is administered to teachers twice a year and provides a summary measure of a school's instructional culture along with domain scores for a variety of areas. Ross' score of 9.7 out of 10 places it in the top percentile for all DCPS schools. Examples of teacher feedback include 100% agreement with the following statements: "My school leader articulates a clear overarching vision that drives priorities, goals and decision making within the school; leaders at my school seek out feedback from teachers; teachers at my school share a common vision of what effective teaching looks like." 90% of teachers reported that they had been provided with an opportunity to "be in charge of something important" at school.

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

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Our unwavering belief and expectation that every child we serve can meet or exceed grade level standards is the key to our ongoing success. The ONE practice that is most influential in meeting this goal is the implementation of a high-quality Response to Intervention (RTI) multi-level model of instruction. The foundational Tier 1 level calls for excellent standards-based, rigorous curriculum for all students. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) call for a focus on content-area reading and writing. At Ross, we place a heavy emphasis on Science and Social Studies instruction beginning in kindergarten. We not only want our children to read and write at or above grade level, but we want them to read and write about the world at large. We find that embracing the content areas in our Tier 1 instruction increases student engagement and curiosity. Embracing this multi-level model of support is a pro-active way of serving all children. No child at Ross is denied access to grade level curriculum and instruction.

We intentionally use student data to plan instructional supports to prevent academic performance gaps from developing and/or widening. We collect data through district mandated universal screenings multiple times a year and through school-based assessments. We then identify the best intervention to meet the child's needs, implement a six-week cycle of additional support, monitor progress along the way, review data, and celebrate growth. Our 2018 reading data demonstrates that 95% of students were on or above grade level at the end of first grade. Our 2018 PARCC data demonstrates an absence of an achievement gap between our black and white students in English/Language Arts and Mathematics.

Implementing a quality, effective RTI model requires the ethic of shared responsibility we foster through budgeting, strategic staffing, flexible scheduling and professional development. At Ross, choices are made so that all students are supported by a wide variety of educators and support staff throughout the day, including classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, intervention specialists, and specials teachers. Our operations team is minimally staffed in order to prioritize hiring additional teachers. Scheduling decisions are made to ensure that there are two or more adults in every classroom at any given time to provide small group or individual instruction and support. Our professional development focus is on continually developing and improving our teaching craft. The success of any Ross student is the shared responsibility of each staff member that student encounters throughout the day, from morning meeting through closing meeting. On the Insight survey for instructional culture, 100% of the staff agreed with the statement, "there is low tolerance for ineffective teaching at my school."

Having a single, bold priority—ensuring that each child meets or exceeds grade-level expectations—makes it easier to say no to the many shiny distractors that are eager to come into our school house. With this one focus in mind, all the myriad decisions our school community needs to make become much easier, which fosters greater success for students, a trustful relationship with families, and a dedicated, fulfilled staff.