

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Debra Lynne Gallagher

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

Official School Name Downey School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 250 Downey Street

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

Westwood MA 02090-2034
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Norfolk County

Telephone (781) 326-7500

Fax (781) 329-7642

Web site/URL
http://www.westwood.k12.ma.us/downey-school/

E-mail dgallagher@westwood.k12.ma.us

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*Ms. Emily Parks

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail eparks@westwood.k12.ma.us

District Name Westwood School District Tel. (781) 326-7500

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 Mr. Charles Donahue

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

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

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

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

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

Part I – Eligibility Certification

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. 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):
- 5 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 7 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 | 35 | 26 | 61 |
| 1 | 27 | 21 | 48 |
| 2 | 26 | 17 | 43 |
| 3 | 29 | 17 | 46 |
| 4 | 19 | 20 | 39 |
| 5 | 25 | 18 | 43 |
| 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 | 161 | 119 | 280 |

*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):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 18 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 72 % White
 - 4 % 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: 3%

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

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

| Steps For Determining Mobility Rate | Answer |
|--|---------------|
| (1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year | 7 |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year | 0 |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)] | 7 |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017 | 250 |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4) | 0.03 |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100 | 3 |

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 3%
8 Total number ELL

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

Korean, Greek, Arabic, Chinese, Mandarin

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 11%
Total number students who qualify: 30

8. Students receiving special education services: 24 %
67 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>19</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>11</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>15</u> Developmental Delay | <u>7</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>8</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>3</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: 10
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

| | Number of Staff |
|--|------------------------|
| Administrators | 1 |
| Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher. | 14 |
| Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc. | 20 |
| Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students. | 24 |
| Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc. | 3 |

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 20:1

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 | 99% | 99% | 99% | 99% | 99% |
| 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.

At Downey School, we believe that all students are capable of learning and reaching their potential. We also believe that the emotional well being of students is critical in order for students to access learning.

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

Downey School is one of five elementary schools in Westwood, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston. We serve 280 students in grades K-5, with an average class size of 20 students per class. In addition to the general education classrooms, we also have 3 district-wide programs that support children with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder), ranging from moderate to severe. These programs, PEER (Promoting Education & Effective Relationships, K-5), Lower WABA (Westwood Applied Behavior Analysis, K-1), Upper WABA (Westwood Applied Behavior Analysis, grades 2-5) are an essential part of our community, which enables staff to teach their students about inclusion and having empathy for peers with disabilities.

The staff is comprised of 14 full time general education classroom teachers, 6 full time Special Education Teachers, 1 full time Literacy Specialist, 1 full time Math Specialist, 1 part-time ELL (English Language) instructor, 1 full time ELL Instructional Assistant, 3 full time Kindergarten Assistants, 10 Special Education Assistants, and 12 ABA Tutors. The parent community at Downey School is very supportive, holding the Downey Staff, Principal, and their own children to high academic and behavioral standards. They are true partners with the Downey Staff to educate their children. The Downey PTO is a strong organization, with a mission to fundraise for the school, so that resources are available to bring in enrichment programming that supports the K-5 curriculum.

School and PTO sponsored activities have become beloved traditions at Downey School. For example, every August, Downey school hosts an Open House, where all students and families are invited into the school to see their classroom, meet their teacher, and say "hello" to classmates. This opportunity was originally available to students who had a hard time transitioning after long vacations. Realizing all students would benefit, we changed it to a school-wide Open House. Every spring, the P.E. teacher organizes a K-5 Field Day that includes students, staff, and parents. Following Field Day activities, staff and students enjoy a picnic lunch together. This is an event that everyone enjoys.

The Downey School PTO has an active mission to build community and raise money for the school. Each year, the PTO hosts a Halloween party, Holiday Fair, Downey School Play, Movie Night, and Kids Rule the School for students and their families. Most of the events are free or have a minimal fee. PTO also hosts the annual Downey School Gala, which raises significant funds for enrichment programs.

Downey School is proud of creating three thriving district-wide special education programs that support children with autism. The success of these programs has been due to collaboration among Downey School, Westwood Student Services, parents, and outside consultants. Many years ago, students with ASD were taught by staff from (NECC) New England Center for Children. Although NECC, was able to meet the academic needs of this population, NECC staff and students were not connected to the Downey community. Westwood made the decision to create our own special education programs to support students on the autism spectrum, and PEER and Upper and Lower WABA programs were created to meet the varying needs of students on the autism spectrum. Once these programs were established, the next goal was to maximize opportunities to integrate these students into the general education classrooms and the fabric of the Downey community. This is a goal we are very proud of having achieved.

The second distinct accomplishment for Downey School is being recognized by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as a 2016, 2017, 2018 “School of Recognition” for High Achievement, High Growth, and Exceeding Targets on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). We are 1 of 52 schools recognized by the state out of the 1800 schools in Massachusetts.

Downey School runs on a daily block schedule. Grade level teachers teach the same subject at the same time. The block schedule is staggered so that the different grade levels teach core subjects at different times. This allows support staff to align their schedules to provide in-class support during Tier 1 Instructional time. The block schedule includes a 30-minute intervention period that takes place four days each week at every grade level. During this time, students receive Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention services. This ensures that students do not lose core instructional time.

The Downey staff pays close attention to the social and emotional well being of every student. Throughout the day, there are frequent check-ins with children, opportunities for students to role play “expected” social behavior, and opportunities to problem solve with staff. Specific curriculum and structures to support student’s social-emotional growth include Open Circle, Lunch Bunch, and motor breaks.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

Students at Downey School participate in ELA (English Language Arts) within a Readers' and Writers' Workshop structure. Each grade level has a designated reading and writing block. In grades K-2, Readers' Workshop consists of 20 minutes of systematic phonics using Wilson Foundations. The Readers' and Writers' Workshop curriculum is built around units of study that align with the Massachusetts ELA Frameworks. Within each 4-6 week unit, students learn the strategies strong readers and writers use across the following literary genres: narrative, persuasive, and nonfiction. Units are closely aligned so the reading work students do supports their writing work. In addition, units link to content area topics as much as possible. The units between grade levels spiral to build mastery and sophistication.

The workshop model provides a differentiated and tiered approach to instruction. Each lesson begins with a whole class focus lesson aimed at the grade level standards as outlined by the Massachusetts ELA Curriculum Frameworks. Students then move to independent and small group work where teachers differentiate instruction based on need and ability. The workshop allows students to spend the majority of time reading and writing.

Downey School has a designated 30-minute intervention block in which students receive Tier 2 or 3 interventions from classroom teachers, literacy specialists, and special education teachers. Students do not miss regular classroom instruction and gain an extra-dose of targeted support.

Downey School uses ongoing assessment data to monitor student progress and analyze the impact of classroom instruction. All students are given reading assessments at the beginning and end of the year in order for classroom teachers to learn about each student's strengths and needs and to measure overall progress. In addition, pre and post assessments are used before and after units of study to measure student growth and ownership of strategies/content. Ongoing assessment allows for flexible and targeted intervention throughout the school year. Downey School also looks vertically at student assessment data and student work. This allows teachers to analyze their instruction and make decisions about professional development. Recently we have analyzed our writing program to ensure common language and alignment of expectations across grade levels. We have also analyzed our spelling practices to ensure mastery. The school provides time for professional development at monthly faculty meetings, school-based targeted professional development, PLC (Professional Learning Communities) and through coaching cycles with the Literacy Specialist.

1b. Mathematics:

Students at Downey School participate in mathematics instruction daily for 60 minutes within a Math Workshop structure. Content and practice standards from the Massachusetts Frameworks along with student understanding drive planning, instruction, and assessment. Teachers implement the TERC Investigations program as the base curriculum. The curriculum includes Daily Routines, Investigations, and Homework. At each grade level, there are 7 to 9 units of study, each approximately 2-6 weeks in length. Units are closely aligned to the strands in the content standards: Number and Operations in Base Ten, Operations and Algebraic Thinking, Measurement and Data, and Geometry. The math work allows students to use the math practice standards while developing their understanding of the content.

The workshop model provides a differentiated and tiered approach to instruction. A typical math workshop includes a number sense routine, whole or small group instruction and discussion as well as time for students to work with partners, small groups and/or independently. These components allow students to be engaged independently in the practices of mathematicians while teachers differentiate the work to meet their students' varied needs. Assessments are used before and after units of study to measure student growth and ownership of strategies/content.

Downey School has a designated 30-minute intervention block in which students receive Tier 2 or 3 interventions from classroom teachers, math specialists, and special education teachers. Students do not miss regular classroom instruction and gain an extra-dose of targeted support in a specific critical area in the content standards for half of the year, 3 times a week. In addition, the Math Specialists at Downey School collaborate with all teachers in coaching cycles for 6-8 weeks focused on a student goal based on data. During these cycles, teachers and math specialists use ongoing assessment data to monitor student progress and analyze the impact of classroom instruction.

1c. Science:

Students at Downey School participate in Science and Engineering learning through a graduated process of immersion in inquiry-based experiences. Similar to Readers/Writers/Math-workshops, students are engaged in science lessons with introductory lessons facilitated by teachers or science specialists. The district has woven together the following resources: STEMscopes, Mystery Science and the NEED (National Energy Education Development) curriculum, as well as district-designed lessons, to fully address the Massachusetts 2016 Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) Frameworks. Each grade level has a comprehensive Scope and Sequence document to ensure all areas of the frameworks are addressed and that the approaches are balanced to ensure that hands-on learning and sense-making is engaged in across the year and in all areas of scientific study. Teachers balance direct instruction with workshop opportunities that ask students to explore scientific phenomena through hands-on investigation and developing models.

The workshop model in science provides a differentiated and tiered approach to instruction, as well as a way for teachers to assess understanding and observe engagement in scientific practices. Within science workshops, students engage in scientific dialog, citing their evidence, and analyze and refine data to build science understandings. Students also engage in independent and small group work where teachers support students based on need and ability. Within these smaller groups, students go on to represent their understandings with written work or detailed diagrams. Student questioning is used to enhance engagement in scientific learning and as a way to assess and refine understanding and growth.

Downey School uses ongoing assessment data to track student progress and evaluate the effectiveness of classroom instruction. Practice-based performative assessments are embedded in the Scope and Sequence at each grade level to provide a summative assessment of multiple, related standards and are used to assess both student growth and curricular effectiveness and rigor in partnership with science specialists.

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

At the elementary level, social studies instruction takes place during 2-3 hour-long blocks per week taught within students' regular classrooms. The units of study are aligned with the grade-level content prescribed in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and follow a developmentally appropriate progression that first examines oneself in relation to family, then local community, and then the larger world. While engaging with the content, the curriculum focuses on developing in students the critical skills necessary to become engaged, informed, responsible citizens.

For example, Kindergarteners study topics close to home: themselves, their family and their community. Grade 1 study broadens out to learn about famous Americans, national holidays, and the geography of the U.S. Second grade takes a deeper look at their family's personal history and focuses on world mapping skills. Third grade studies the history of colonization and the founding of Massachusetts. Grade 4 moves on from colonial America to the Westward Expansion and the geography and natural resources of North America. Fifth grade begins with the exploration of North America and then delves deeply into the American Revolution, the Constitution, and the formation of the Federal Government. Throughout the grades, students are taught to integrate the skills of language arts with social studies and civics content. The study of economics and civics are strands that expand across grades K-5. Students engage in hands-on activities such as simulations of buying and selling goods and student-government led civics projects. They also participate in field trips such as visiting Plymouth Plantation, the historic Fisher School in Westwood, and the Massachusetts State House.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The goal of the Performing Arts Program is to provide opportunities for students to explore the various areas of the arts, while also developing life-long learning skills. The elementary performing arts curricula are aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and guided by the mission statement of the Westwood Performing Arts Department. General music is taught weekly to all students in grades K-5. Students in grades 4 and 5 participate in weekly band practice, and in grade 5 students can participate in the before school Jazz Band. In grade 5 students have half a year of general music instruction and half a year of drama instruction.

The Westwood performing Arts Department provides an environment in which students develop the skills and capacity to create, respond, and perform. Whether engaging in the arts as a performer, director, composer, writer, designer, or technician, our students develop the processes and skills critical to the arts. Performance is an opportunity and a skill we want for all our students. Across the year students participate in a number of performances for the school and our community.

Consistent with the district, the Physical Education program at Downey is designed to teach students movement concepts and motor skills that provide a solid foundation for children to live healthy and active lives. Developmentally appropriate skills and concepts are taught and opportunities are provided to learn and practice skills in a fun and supportive environment. The program is comprised of the following four areas of study, which are aligned with state and national NASPE (National Association for Sport and Physical Education) standards: Educational Games, Gymnastics, Educational Dance, and Fitness. Our children have a forty-five-minute Physical Education class once or twice per week depending on grade level. In addition, specific health topics are covered in our "Same and Different" disability awareness program and the "Our Changing Bodies" puberty education program. Movement skills that are taught include locomotor and non-locomotor movement, balance skills, volleying, striking with and without implements, throwing and catching, expressive movement through dance, and fitness skills that can be used for life. Our Physical Education teachers develop units and lessons that build skills progressively, spiraling toward benchmarks for assessment. In addition to skill development, we emphasize a great deal of time valuing and enjoying movement. Cooperative behavior and social skills are emphasized and woven throughout the curriculum. In addition, we offer Adapted Physical Education (APE), to students from our WABA and PEER programs for students on the autism spectrum. All of our students enthusiastically participate in Physical Education as a part of the healthy, active lifestyle that our teachers encourage!

Foreign Language is not offered at the elementary level in Westwood.

The libraries are the information access hub of the schools, striving to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and resources which will empower them to become independent critical readers and thinkers able to effectively and responsibly acquire, use, and share information. The library program also seeks to support teachers and administrators as they implement the curriculum and its goals. Elementary school library teachers meet with each grade level class on a weekly basis.

In the Westwood Public Schools district, we are 1:1 with Chromebooks in grades 3-12. At the elementary level, these devices are available in the classrooms, the students do not take the Chromebooks home. In grades K-2, five iPads are available for students to use during the math and literacy workshops. Coding During the 2017 - 2018 school year Westwood launched a 3rd-grade coding special. During these weekly classes, Downey's Instructional Technology Coach teaches students the fundamentals of coding, from learning how to create an algorithm using block programming language to incorporate sophisticated

computer science concepts such as loops and conditional statements. Classes are highly student-centered, collaborative, and follow a project-based learning approach. For example, Downey purchased Lego Robot kits that allow students to apply principles of computer science to a number of robotic challenges. This special is aligned with the recently published Massachusetts Digital Literacy and Computer Science Standards and serves as an exemplar for how to effectively incorporate computer science standards at the elementary level when time and resources are so scarce. In addition to content objectives, the 3rd-grade coding special also emphasizes a number of 'habits of mind' including creativity, perseverance, problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration.

Elementary classrooms at Downey implement a comprehensive, research-based social and emotional learning program called Open Circle. The curriculum is designed to develop students' social and emotional skills, such as problem-solving, recognizing and managing emotions, forming good relationships with peers and adults, and considering and understanding the experience of others. The Open Circle program provides a consistent, structured, safe context for exploring these issues while also building a cooperative, inclusive classroom community. Teachers typically devote 30 minutes per week for Open Circle discussions. Teachers have flexibility within the Open Circle curriculum to choose the grade-level lessons that are most pertinent for their students. For example, in a given week, a teacher might select a particular lesson to address an issue that had arisen within the class or a lesson whose theme connects to literature that students are reading.

The School Psychologist joins the Open Circle lessons periodically to support students and teachers. The psychologist also hosts daily Lunch Bunch groups for all grade levels, during which, students play board games and practice social skills. They learn to take turns, lose a game, and listen to others. In every classroom, there are times during the day when students take a brief motor break. This may include yoga, "Go Noodle" exercises, or power walking around the school building. A motor break room is also available for students who require more specialized exercises. These daily social-emotional supports and exercises have helped to create a building where students are comfortable taking risks, making mistakes, and getting their bodies ready to learn.

3. Special Populations:

Downey has many supports available for all types of learners. At the most basic level, our teachers practice differentiation through the workshop model.

In addition, Downey is fortunate to have general education interventionists in literacy and math. The supports look slightly different in each content area and as the grades change. In the early grades, in literacy, the support often takes the form of small pull-out groups to work on decoding and early literacy skills. A Literacy Specialist may also go into the general education setting to support students in class while working on writing. In the older grades, the support may be done in class to lead book groups or work on writing. In math, the Specialists have targeted core concepts in each grade, and run interventions with students based on pre-assessments in those areas. The support may be in the class or pull out.

Beyond these supports, we also have English Language Learner services for those students who need support in that area. We have an instructional assistant to support them in the classroom and a part-time ELL teacher who does pull-out instruction in English Language acquisition.

Of our total school population of 280, 65 (or 23%) are eligible for special education services. This percentage is slightly higher than our district average because Downey hosts two district special education programs which consist of three classrooms and 22 students.

As with general education, in special education at Downey, we offer a range of services. The majority of our students (40) in special education are in the category of Full Inclusion spending less than 21% of their time in special education. We call this our Learning Center model. In this case, students receive their core academic instruction in the general education classroom and from a general education teacher. They often come out during that intervention block for support in reading, writing, math, study skills or related services. The next largest group (with 17 students) is Partial Inclusion in which students receive 21-60% of their

education out of the general education classroom. In this model, which we call our Resource Room, students may receive all their instruction in reading, writing or math, within a special education setting instructed by a special education teacher. The students in this model benefit from a slower pace or an alternative curriculum. Finally, our smallest group, Substantially Separate, is when students receive more than 60% of their education outside the general education classroom. We have 7 students at this level of services.

As mentioned earlier, Downey has two of the district-wide programs for special education with three classrooms. Both programs focus on students with Autism. Our PEER program (Promoting Education and Effective Relationships) is for students with mild to moderate ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder). These students are largely on grade level academically and spend the majority of their time in the general education classroom. They are often supported by an instructional assistant and a behavior support plan. The program does a lot of social coaching in the moment. This type of program includes 1 special education teacher, 5 support staff, and 9 students.

The other program is our WABA program (Westwood Applied Behavior Analysis) for students with more moderate to severe ASD. This year this program has two classrooms with 14 students in total. The classrooms are led by special education teachers with a full-time BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analyst), many ABA Tutors and instructional assistants. The students in this program have a range of skills and abilities. Some are able to participate in the general education classroom with support and modifications. Students are less able to access the general education curriculum, use alternative curricula and assessments. For students in this program, we offer APE (Adapted Physical Education), music therapy, and community trips.

In addition to all of our programs, we have related service providers including speech pathologists, an occupational therapist, a school psychologist, and a physical therapist. The school psychologist and school nurse are available to all Downey students.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Downey School has a set of Core Values that are followed by the school community. These Core Values are Respect, Courage, Pride, Inclusion, Responsibility, and Excellence. These values are displayed throughout the school and practiced during the school day by students and modeled by staff and parents. In addition to the Core Values, each morning, teachers begin their day with a whole class morning meeting which allows the students and staff to greet one another and hear the plan for the day.

Downey School values collaboration. Students at Downey School show growth in all areas because of the commitment of the staff and the use of collaborative teaching practices. Teachers identify a student growth goal and meet with the Math and Literacy coaches on a regular basis to review student work and track progress. The Principal visits classrooms daily and provides feedback to teachers. In addition to this, teachers have common planning times throughout the week to meet and discuss upcoming units of study, review student work and discuss student progress. There are also embedded PD days in the building when staff meet with the Math, Literacy, and Science coaches to discuss curriculum and instruction.

The Downey staff are appreciated, valued, and well supported. During the school year, the Principal may bring in breakfast, lunch, ice cream, tea and coffee, as a way to show her appreciation. Providing meals in the staff room encourages the staff to take a break from their busy schedules and to socialize with their colleagues. The PTO also hosts luncheons for the staff and prepares a week of fun activities during Teacher Appreciation Week to celebrate the excellent work of staff.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

In order for a child to grow and reach their full potential, the staff and parents need to work together as a team. Also, open and clear communication between the school and parents is paramount. There are many opportunities for parents to be a part of their child's team and every effort is made to communicate with families. Opportunities include the Back to School Open House, Curriculum Night, Fall and spring Parent/teacher conferences, School Site Council, and PTO Meetings.

Providing an open line of communication and being transparent with the entire Downey community is a common practice. Communication is provided in a variety of ways. The Daily News is an electronic memo posted daily by the Principal to share important building information. The Downey School website provides information about upcoming events, school resources, and a monthly newsletter from the Principal to families and the community at large. Classroom teachers also have websites where parents can access information. In addition, the Principal uses social media through Twitter (@DowneySchool) to send pictures to show what students are working on during the school day. Also, teachers use a variety of media as another way to communicate with families.

The Principal's reliance on social media, electronic messaging, monthly news updates, has resulted in a community that is well informed and equipped to support children's success.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development in the Westwood Public Schools is designed to support the continuous professional growth and development of all staff. Professional development supports the student learning goals and professional practice goals of the district, the schools, and the individual educator.

Westwood provides multiple district-wide professional development opportunities for its staff. Professional development takes place within the school calendar, after school hours and during vacations. In addition, most Westwood educators take advantage of off-site courses, conferences, workshops and programs to increase their professional expertise. All new teachers participate in a three-year induction and mentoring program to help them acclimate to Westwood Public Schools and develop expertise in district

curriculum and practices.

Professional development opportunities take many forms: multi-day teacher-led courses, consultant-led professional development, off-site professional conferences and workshops, and in-school PLC's. All teachers participate in a full day of professional learning each fall. All teachers set annual professional and student learning goals and work with the Literacy, Math, Science, and Technology coaches to further their practice and achieve their goals. Two Wednesdays per month, release time is provided for teachers to work on building-based or district-wide initiatives.

Three of these release days are building based, an opportunity for Principals to work on building goals created by the Principal and staff. In addition, 60-minute staff meetings are held monthly to work on building goals. For example, in the spring of 2017, Downey School identified an area of weakness in writing instruction- inconsistent terminology was used during instruction making it confusing for students, grade level expectations varied horizontally and vertically among teachers, and all teachers expressed interest in improving their instruction.

The Principal, English Language Arts (ELA) Coordinator, and Downey Literacy Specialist have implemented building-based professional development to work toward these goals. Initially, grade level teachers met to review grade-level benchmarks. Then a school-wide writing prompt for students was administered in the spring and in the fall. Results were analyzed by teachers during faculty meetings. Grade level teams worked together to unpack the Teacher's College Units of Study with the Literacy Specialist. Teachers visited classrooms and observed model writing lessons. Classroom teachers were also coached by the Literacy Specialist and ELA Coordinator to work on improving their writing instruction. The outcome of this PD has been incredible. Teachers are now using common language and have a better understanding of grade level writing expectations. Furthermore, student writing has improved and teachers feel supported in lifting the level of their instruction.

4. School Leadership:

Creating a safe, positive, and welcoming environment for students, staff, and parents is critical to having a high functioning building. Staff at Downey School are encouraged to take risks and to set high learning goals for themselves and all students. The Principal has had the pleasure of hiring more than half of the staff members at Downey School in her ten years as the building Principal. The Principal seeks out staff input about staff hiring. This has allowed her to hire staff that shares the same work ethic, values, and goals for student growth. When staff doesn't meet their goals, the Principal pays close attention to their self-reflection, stamina to continue working towards their goals, and their revised plan to achieve those goals.

In addition to creating a positive school climate, the Principal works closely with the Special Education Team Chair, the Director of Student Services, and the special education teachers. As a team, they closely monitor the progress of the students in the district-wide programs at Downey School, (PEER, Upper WABA and Lower WABA), as well as the other students on Individualized Education Plans (IEP). This has allowed us to closely monitor and support the progress of students with special needs and close the achievement gap which has recognized Downey School by the state as a School of Excellence.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

One practice that has made it possible to meet the varied student needs and to maximize student growth is the commitment to create and sustain an inclusive environment. The Downey community is thoughtful about how to support students in an inclusive setting. One strategy used to include all students for core instruction was to create a schedule that includes an intervention block that provides a second dose of targeted instruction in a small group setting.

Our building block schedule was created in a way where core content (Math and ELA) at the differing grade levels is staggered, so that special educators and support staff can be in the classrooms during this time to co-teach and provide 1:1 and small group support to students. Most students are in the general education setting for core content and receive their IEP (Individual Education Plan) related services during their grade level intervention blocks, a time when no new instruction is being taught. We also have a co-taught ELA and Math class in grade 5. These classes are co-taught by the special education teacher and classroom teacher. To ensure that students are making progress towards their goals, weekly consult meetings take place between classroom teachers and special educators to discuss student progress, as well as planning lessons and identifying essential skills for upcoming units of study.

In addition to classroom inclusion, students also participate in reverse inclusion opportunities, especially with some of our severely autistic children. Grade level classmates may join students in the PEER, Lower WABA, Upper WABA classrooms for snack time and/or recess so that students in these programs can work on their social goals and make strong connections with their peers and all the students at Downey School.

This school year we are piloting a Peer Coaching program in grade 5. Student volunteers are paired up with a student in the PEER or WABA programs to mentor. The students who have social goals on their IEPs and have the opportunity to practice their social skills with the peer mentor. During this time, they may play a board game, build LEGO towers, or engage in dramatic play. The ABA Tutors are available to supervise these activities and provide support when needed. The outcome of this program has been incredible. Feedback from the grade 5 mentors has been very positive, and the spontaneous interactions between the 5th graders and their mentees in the school hallways is absolutely heartwarming. One parent of a child in the WABA program reported to a staff member, "We were in the grocery store the other day and a 5th-grade student came right up to us and greeted my son! This has never happened before, he really is a part of the Downey community!" This peer mentoring program has allowed Downey students to internalize the core values of inclusivity and respect for everyone.

Lastly, the Downey PTO Board works closely with a parent who is a liaison between the PTO and the parents of special education students to make sure that all PTO sponsored events are accessible to all students. They also hire Downey special education staff to support students at their events when it is requested by a parent. For example, at the annual Halloween Party, the PTO opened the doors to the event 30 minutes early, so that students with disabilities could participate in the Trick-or-Treating activity before all the other children arrived. These students enjoyed this activity without the noise and craziness of a loud group of children around them. Students with disabilities also participate in the PTO sponsored school play each year. This has truly been a collaborative process between the PTO and the school Principal.

Creating a school community that fosters empathy, a feeling that everyone belongs, a place where all learning styles and challenges are supported and celebrated, has created a positive learning environment for all students and staff.