

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 [X] Choice

Name of Principal Mr. Deane W Bates

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

Official School Name Westhampton Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 37 Kings Highway

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

Westhampton MA 01027-9506
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Hampshire County

Telephone (413) 527-0561

Fax (413) 529-9753

Web site/URL

https://www.westhamptonelementar
yschool.org

E-mail dbates@hr-k12.org

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*MR Aaron Osborne

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail aosborne@hr-k12.org

District Name Westhampton Tel. (413) 527-0561

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 Mrs. Brigid Warren

(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 1 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	7	1	8
K	9	7	16
1	2	8	10
2	12	7	19
3	9	8	17
4	10	10	20
5	7	9	16
6	9	8	17
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	65	58	123

*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
 - 0 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 92 % White
 - 2 % 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: 2%

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

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	3
(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)]	3
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	122
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1%
1 Total number ELL

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

Russian

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

8. Students receiving special education services: 24 %
30 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>2</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>5</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>12</u> Developmental Delay | <u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>5</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 17
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.	8
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	5
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	11
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 15:1

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	96%	96%	96%	96%	97%
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.

The Westhampton Elementary School is committed to establishing an environment in which we encourage good character formation, foster self-esteem, stimulate continual curiosity and develop a life-long desire for learning.

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

Each year in the Spring the school Principal identifies and reports available choice slots to the school committee. Choice students are drawn from a random lottery by the administrative assistant and one teacher. Siblings of choice students are chosen from a random lottery. The sibling lottery is done before regular choice lottery.

PART III – SUMMARY

Westhampton, a rural community located roughly 100 miles west of Boston in Western Massachusetts, is home to approximately 1,600 people who live in 540 households. There is a strong sense of pride and a spirit of resourcefulness that permeates this bucolic New England town. The first full-time resident settled in Westhampton in 1758. Since then, many families have lived in the town for multiple generations. Over the years, small local businesses have joined the town's primary industries, which are farming and logging. Although the population is quite small, the town itself is quite large, with a total land area of roughly 28 square miles.

Westhampton Elementary School is one of four elementary schools in the Hampshire Regional School District (HRSD). HRSD serves 1,700 students in four single-school elementary districts and one secondary school district. The students who enroll in the districts live in the five Hampshire County towns of Chesterfield, Goshen, Southampton, Westhampton, and Williamsburg. The four elementary schools feed into one middle-high school also located in the town of Westhampton. Each of the elementary schools ranges in size. Built in 1990, Westhampton Elementary School serves a student population of 123.

Westhampton Elementary School is strong academically; ninety-seven percent of students meet the goals established by the Massachusetts school accountability system. In 2018, Westhampton Elementary was named a School of Recognition by the State Department of Education for exceeding MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) targets and maintaining high student growth percentiles (a measure of student achievement over time). This is the third time that WES has earned this distinction. The school's reputation for excellence makes it an appealing option for parents from local communities who often choose to send their children to Westhampton Elementary through the inter-district school choice program. Roughly, 17% of the students who attend Westhampton Elementary School are school-choice students.

Thirty-four full- and part-time staff members work at Westhampton Elementary. Ninety-three percent of the school's teachers are designated by the state of as highly qualified teachers. The student to teacher ratio is 8.5:1. Most classrooms have at least one paraprofessional to provide additional support for students and teachers. The school's staff is highly dedicated. Since there is only one teacher per grade, the planning and decision-making for that grade depends on the initiative and effort of that classroom's teacher. However, the school's small size and its strong academic focus encourage significant collaboration across grade levels.

Part of what makes the school such a special place is its highly involved community. Parents are tremendously supportive of teachers, and teachers strive to include parents in their children's learning as much as possible. The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is comprised of a group of parents dedicated to finding ways to enable school initiatives. The PTO's fundraising efforts throughout the year support a significant number of learning opportunities for both students and teachers. The PTO makes students and families feel welcome by planning and organizing a variety of school events. Working together for the benefit of the children who attend the school is a hallmark of the community and its dedication to the success of students and staff.

The school's culture centers on students being kind to and taking care of each other. Teachers are trained in the Responsive Classroom approach to create a united community within classrooms that recognizes and cares for students' social-emotional needs. The first six weeks of school each year are devoted to building strong peer relationships while establishing classroom rules and procedures. Emphasis is placed on modeling positive behaviors and providing opportunities for students to practice those behaviors. Each class starts the day with a morning meeting. Students look forward to starting the day in a positive manner. Each classroom is paired with another as "buddies," and together they engage in a variety of activities throughout the year. Students in all grades look forward to buddy activities. The buddy program is also helpful because the "big kids" can look out for the "little kids" in the lunchroom, on the playground, and on the long bus rides to and from school.

The teachers involved in designing the school building in 1990 wanted to have a communal space in which the entire school could gather. This area is known as the "common area" and events that occur there are

referred to as “Common Areas.” Every other Friday morning throughout the school year, the school meets in the common area for opening exercises. The grades take turns hosting the gathering, and parents and community members are invited to participate. Friday meetings in the common area are a tradition at our school enjoyed by everyone.

The residents of Westhampton take pride in our school. The students, their parents and teachers, and community members in town not only work together to build a successful school climate, but also endeavor to create an environment where everyone is a learner. Westhampton Elementary School truly is a special place.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

At Westhampton Elementary School (WES), we value the opportunities for collaboration our size affords us. Over the years, we have worked to create a reading and ELA curriculum that spans the grades. Comparable data points allow us easily to determine student growth and performance. Therefore, we have all-school assessments that are conducted biannually, using DIBELS and the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark system. Our two reading specialists analyze the data and present the results during data team meetings. Some students qualify for tiered intervention outside the classroom. These interventions include Leveled Literacy for small groups and Reading Recovery and Orton-Gillingham for one-to-one instruction.

At WES every teacher is a reading teacher. We strive to provide students with instruction that simultaneously addresses the learning standards and engages students at their developmental level. Starting in PreK, teachers use Lively Letters, a research-based multisensory program, to support students' acquisition of phonics, as well as the naturally linked skills of encoding and decoding. Our kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers use guided reading during ELA instruction. Grades 3 through 6 use the Reading Street program. As a school, we recognize that students benefit from teachers use of common instructional practices and similar academic language from grade to grade.

When it come to the complex task of teaching writing, our approach is similarly collaborative and comprehensive. Teachers use Story Grammar Marker, a manipulative tool for narrative development, which supports students in grades two through six to develop the reading, writing, and speaking skills that are vital for academic and social success. Additionally, teachers in grades 5 and 6 incorporate "Empowering Writers" and "Word Wisdom" to develop further students' knowledge of writing and grammar.

Our school's small size facilitates the kind of collaboration around curriculum implementation, instructional practices, and assessment methods that makes our school special. The dedication of our teachers to common pedagogical practices around the teaching of reading and writing enables our students' success.

1b. Mathematics:

Much of our success in math is the result of a district initiative to adopt a uniform math program for grades k-6. Six years ago, a math textbook selection committee evaluated programs and selected a research-based, standards-focused program. The adoption of the EnVisions math program provided consistency of language, sequence, and approach for both teachers and students. Using EnVisions as a base, teachers were also given permission to individualize their instruction. This hybrid approach has been central to our success.

The EnVisions program includes fact practice, unit tests, and benchmark assessments. Teachers access additional materials, as needed, from sources which they know work well within their grade level. MCAS data is analyzed and reviewed. Data teams study results and identify areas of weakness to inform practice and better meet the needs of students. Finally, the Group Mathematics Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GMADE) is a universal screening given in all grades at the start and end of each school year.

Each teacher differentiates math instruction. To aid this effort, most classrooms have a paraprofessional in the room during math class to support small groups or individual students as needed. Teachers accommodate advanced learners with enrichment activities. Whole-school and grade-level after school math clubs have been started by parent volunteers and teachers.

IXL, an immersive k-12 learning experience that provides comprehensive, standards-aligned content, is an additional technology-based program that is used across the school. Each student in the building has an individual account, which they can access at home and at school. IXL addresses each math standard at each grade level and allows for practice on any concept. Math is taught for at least one hour in each grade.

Whenever possible, math is also incorporated into daily activities, as well as into art, music, and physical education classes. This approach demonstrates to students that math is not a subject confined to an isolated hour lesson but used in everyday life.

1c. Science:

Science lessons at WES are based on our teachers' knowledge of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and the Massachusetts State Science Standards. The district coordinated professional development around the new state science standards adopted in 2017. That professional development encouraged collaboration among colleagues to share both unit content and lesson structure.

Discovery Education is a technology-based curriculum used by all grades as an integral component to introduce, support, and assess each science unit. The adoption of Discovery Education at WES encouraged students to think critically and to ask questions about the world around them.

The teachers of WES believe that it is important to involve outside experts to teach students about scientific learning. A community landscape environmentalist has offered a hydrology workshop to fifth-grade students for the past two years. During the workshop, students learned about watersheds, investigated stream flow, and created a culminating art project using natural materials at a nearby river. This year, we partnered with the Westhampton Council on Aging to build three community gardens. Work in and study of these gardens meets several grade-level standards and includes a strong practical component.

Teachers also try to incorporate as much learning as possible by taking field trips. Each year, we take advantage of programs offered by the area's five colleges, including Amherst College's Berneski Museum of Natural History. Field trips are often nature-based; for example, third grade classes take an annual hike to the top of Tob Hill to identify trees and animal adaptations. In fifth-grade, students build on that early knowledge to acquire more specific information that deepens student awareness of local fauna and foliage.

Assessment of curricular units is designed to report student understanding and topic mastery. Assessments are administered in both paper and digital format. One way we are addressing the vertical alignment of science content is a student-created Interactive Science Notebook. This teacher-guided k-6 project is a resource that encourages the extension of science knowledge and understanding across the years.

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

Our teachers recognize the importance of implementing a strong social studies curriculum in our classrooms, and the introduction of the revised History and Social Studies State Framework prompted teachers to develop new units to teach our students about liberty, justice, and equality. The lens for our instruction includes not only our school and community, but also the wider perspectives of the state, the nation, and the globe.

To teach students about the world around them, field trips are an important part of our social studies curriculum. When learning about local businesses, the kindergarten and first-grade classes visit a local market. When the third graders study local history, they take a trip into Westhampton to view the sites. Third- and fourth-grade classes visit the state capital to explore the many historical sites there.

The curriculum in the upper elementary grades moves from local and national history to an even wider perspective. For example, the sixth-grade curriculum focuses on world geography. After studying latitude and longitude, students used handheld GPS devices to find a geocache (a travel bug in a box) hidden in the woods of Tob Hill. Our goal was to get the bug to three other continents. A fellow geocacher picked up the bug and moved it to another cache. Since that first move, the bug has traveled almost 26,000 miles.

Additionally, our teachers often choose literature that incorporates social justice themes into everyday lessons. We were very fortunate to have a visit from Ruby Bridges, the first African-American child to desegregate the all-white William Frantz Elementary School in Louisiana. Ms. Bridges' visit to WES was prompted by a fifth grader's persuasive letter of invitation that asked Ms. Bridges to help students better

understand what life was like during the Civil Rights era.

Teachers are always looking for opportunities to help students honor the importance of social justice issues. For example, students have held food and clothing drives, and they have raised money for those affected by natural disasters. The teachers at WES believe that it is important to model for our students how to make the world a better place.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

Westhampton Elementary offers preschool for three- and four-year-old children in half-day and full-day formats. A core curriculum consisting of mathematics, language arts, science, social studies, and fine arts, is provided to students. The core curriculum is combined with the Standards for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and the Approaches to Play and Learning (APL) consistently through direct instruction and hands-on activities in a play-based environment.

Preschool utilizes the same pedagogical approaches and curriculum materials as kindergarten and first grade. Having a solid foundation of social and emotional skills that begins in preschool benefits all students and improves their ability to listen, to learn, to attend to tasks, and to participate appropriately in group activities in future grades.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Students in kindergarten through grade six have art, music, and physical education classes once a week, for approximately 40 minutes. In art, students explore a wide variety of materials. They identify and interpret art by referring to contextual information and analyzing relevant subject matter. Art students explore characteristics of form and the use of media. For instance, students of all grade levels help to paint sets for the school's annual musical. In addition, sixth graders begin the year by creating a peace poster for the Lions Club. The Annual Spring Art & Music Night is a showcase of student artwork and performance for the community to enjoy.

Music learning objectives are based on the National Core Arts Standards and are grouped into seven components: pitch, duration, loudness, timbre, texture, form, and style. The goal of the National Core Arts Standards is to provide students with opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of music through consistent interaction with the basic components of music. In addition, students in fifth and sixth grades have the option to take weekly instrumental music lessons. The music teacher's goal is to cultivate a life-long enjoyment of, curiosity about, and appreciation for music. An integral part of the music program is the importance it places on aligning itself with events happening in the community, such as the annual Fall Festival and the town's Memorial Day celebration.

The physical education program is designed to create a safe and enjoyable environment for learning. The curriculum follows the developmentally appropriate progression established by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Health Curriculum Framework and the standards outlined by the National Association for Sports and Physical Education (NASPE). The purpose of the NASPE standards is to develop physically educated students who have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity. Lessons in the lower grades focus on spatial awareness, movement exploration, effort concepts, non-manipulative skills, and manipulative skills. As students get older, early skills training provides a foundation for participation in individual and team sports. The Teaching Games for Understanding model is used to encourage students to think strategically about play. Cooperative games are employed to reinforce responsibility and teamwork. In addition, students spend time learning about the importance of a healthy lifestyle, including the importance of good eating habits and drug use prevention.

Our school librarian meets with each grade once a week to support what teachers are working on in their

classrooms and to foster a love of reading. In 2012, we became the first school in the Pioneer Valley to initiate Reading to Therapy Dogs. Students look forward to their opportunity to read with and to the dogs. The librarian also incorporates an online audio book service in her instruction. Finally, the librarian has established a program in which members from the Council on Aging in town visit weekly to read with students in kindergarten through the second grade.

Students also receive weekly technology lessons from our technology integration specialist for one trimester per year. Lessons cover standards from the Massachusetts Digital Literacy and Computer Science Framework and the Science and Technology Engineering Framework. Students in grades k and grade 1 utilize BeeBots as an introduction to programming and robotics. Students in grades 1 through 4 use Lego WeDo kits to increase programming and robotics knowledge that connects to other classroom learning. Students in grades 5 and 6 use Lego Mindstorm kits for open-ended robotics challenges. Additionally, students in grade 6 work collaboratively using the engineering design process to make a digital communication system using lasers and student-engineered mirrors to send messages in binary from one end of the school to the other.

Other programs include weekly Social Thinking lessons in kindergarten. The curriculum is based on Michelle Garcia Winner's work and emphasizes whole body listening, following the group plan, flexible thinking, and matching the size of the reaction to the size of the problem. First grade has weekly lessons based on Leah Kuypers' Zones of Regulation curriculum. Using these programs at the classroom level enables us to have a consistent language for emphasizing expected behavior. Preschool, first, second, and third grades receive weekly Second Step lessons which focus on skills for learning, empathy, emotion management, and problem solving. Grades four through six rotate Second Step Bullying Prevention lessons throughout the year. Some additional extracurricular activities offered to students throughout the school year are math club, ski club, the school musical, and Girls on the Run.

3. Special Populations:

Students at our school are assessed across all developmental areas during preschool and kindergarten screenings. Classroom teachers refer students about whom they are concerned to a child study team. All students participate in Fountas & Pinnell benchmark assessments at the beginning and end of each school year. Students receiving Tier 2 and 3 supports are also assessed at the mid-year point.

Our preschool teacher serves the needs of children with and without special needs in an integrated classroom. Currently, we have one special education teacher working with grades k-2 and another special education teacher for grades 3-6. At tiers 1 and 2, we have a reading recovery teacher who primarily supports first-grade students, but also supports students in other grades as needed. Our reading specialists help students in grades k-6 using resources such as the Leveled Literacy Intervention system and Lively Letters. Both reading specialists have completed the requirements for level one Orton-Gillingham certification. The school has a full-time speech language pathologist and several part-time specialists including an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, a school adjustment counselor, a school psychologist, and an English Language Learner (ELL) teacher.

Within our preschool to grade six student population, disability categories include health specific disabilities, developmental delays, emotional challenges, communication disorders, and specific learning disabilities that range from moderate to severe. Special educators follow the combination model of "push-in" and "pull-out" services, based on an individual student's needs physically, emotionally, and academically. We utilize technology such as Learning Ally for students with print disabilities to have access to grade level text on the iPad. We also utilize "speech-to-text" for writing and "text-to-speech" when participating in classroom reading assignments. For students with significant reading deficits, special educators implement the Wilson Foundations program and the Wilson Reading System. Using a student's service delivery grid, the special education team participates in monthly consults. The purpose of these consultations is to discuss student progress, make classroom accommodations, determine how services are supporting a student's ability to access grade-level curriculum, and assess any areas that require an alternate approach.

For our students with moderate to severe special needs, we have built relationships with outside providers including a vision specialist. We also work with a behavioral specialist for our students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). We have built a relationship with an outside provider who supplies assistive technology.

Students who are performing above grade level are challenged to succeed in many different ways. Instruction is differentiated across the grade-levels so that every student can work toward his or her academic potential. For example, one student might complete a writing assignment using multiple-research strategies, while another might find that employing one such strategy meets his or her needs and enables that student to fulfill the wider parameters of the assignment.

Our school also believes that students succeed when their social-emotional needs are met. We believe that students require direct instruction to build their social-emotional skills and to develop self-regulation. We use Social Thinking and Zones of Regulation with our younger students. The students in our upper grades participate in the Second Step curriculum. Individual and small group sessions address self-regulation and perspective taking to support students with Autism Spectrum Disorder or attention challenges.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Our entire school staff works to cultivate a positive learning climate each day. We do this by carefully planning and managing the daily routines, rituals, and activities that affect the learning environment. One key to our success has been to develop and cultivate relationships with our families and community members. Families are valued members of the learning community, and our staff works to demonstrate this daily. Staff members take part in our town's celebrations and ceremonies, such as the Fall Festival, Memorial Day, and Veterans Day. Students see their teachers as part of their larger community and witness daily interactions between teachers and family members. We welcome new families each year by hosting an end-of-summer ice cream social. We arrange school visits for new families, and all preschool through grade two teachers are available for students to "drop in" the day before school begins. The staff is thoughtful about managing student transitions and their attendant emotional responses as they enter preschool, move between grade levels, or graduate to a new building.

One of the foundations of our philosophy is that students learn best when equal attention is paid to maintaining a positive social-emotional environment and an academically rigorous one. Programs like the Responsive Classroom help to teach children skillful ways to solve problems and to interact successfully with their peers. The key to this type of engagement is the explicit teaching of prosocial skills to allow students to be able to communicate and interact with each other appropriately. Strength-based programming allows our students to feel confident. Our staff understands the importance of building a positive atmosphere by establishing clear rules and boundaries dealing with physical and emotional safety. We model respect and civility in our interactions with all members of our learning community. All of the adults in our school are considered teachers and participate in helping children to grow and develop to their full potential.

Our school culture is characterized by the idea that we must all be our best selves each day and seek to bring out the best selves of others. Teachers model and embody the idea that learning is a function of a positive growth mindset. Our staff leads by example; we continually seek and are open to constructive feedback from administrators, parents, colleagues, and students. We demonstrate that we are all learners and work to foster positive attitudes by identifying the unique strengths of each of our students. Through this process, teachers reinforce that success is measured by more than grades or awards. We see mistakes as necessary and valuable in the learning process. Student and staff successes are recognized and celebrated both formally and informally through whole school meetings, recognition ceremonies, and ongoing interaction with staff members. Staff is recognized and valued through formal award programs such as the Grinspoon Excellence in Teaching award. Staff efforts are also recognized through our annual Teacher Appreciation Week, when parents and PTO members come together to show their support for teachers and to recognize their work throughout the year.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

At Westhampton Elementary School, our families and community are important resources that are utilized in order to benefit students both academically and socially. We are fortunate that engaged parents are the norm, that we have a progressive PTO, and a supportive town. In order to sustain such involvement, we employ many strategies in order to make everyone feel welcome, to include them in curriculum and performance, to collaborate with community organizations, to provide opportunities to participate in social awareness activities, and to participate in annual events. The three strategies we feel most beneficial to engage communities and families are open communication, holding "Common Areas," and celebrating annual events.

Direct communication in our school happens daily, weekly, and monthly. Our main office sends home a bimonthly newsletter that updates families about events and activities. Classroom teachers send home and post online a monthly newsletter that is specific to that class. Parents are encouraged to help out with any curricular area with which they have experience or expertise. Progress notes are distributed three times a

year, and sometimes more often as warranted.

“Common Areas” are held 2-3 times per month and are led by each grade-level class twice a year. Parents, families, and community members are informed and invited to attend. “Common Areas” allow families and community members to see what and how children are learning. Performances that occur in the common area allow students to showcase their work and achievements in 30-45 minutes. Many community organizations also present in the common area. These groups include: the Lions Club, the American Heart Association, the Boy Scouts, the Council on Aging, and local police and fire departments. In addition, we have many social awareness topics which are spotlighted at “Common Areas.” A few years ago, fifth- and sixth-graders participated in the Heifer Project and shared their experiences. The Veterans Affairs Department came to enlist us in helping aid Puerto Rico after Hurricane Gloria. The Lion’s Club has recognized student winners of the Peace Poster Contest. We use “Common Areas” as a way to have students and families look beyond our small community.

Finally, much of our success is attributed to holding and participating in annual events. We weave different community organizations into these events. For example, firefighters cook at our annual field day. The teachers volunteer at the Fall Festival. Students perform at the Memorial Day celebration. Our students at Westhampton Elementary succeed with the help and encouragement of many community groups.

3. Professional Development:

Westhampton Elementary views professional development (PD) as a four-tiered system rooted in the academic, social, and emotional needs of the students and school community. The tiered system begins at the district level where school administrators work closely with the district’s curriculum director to program professional development activities and presentations that benefit the work of all professionals across the schools. Sometimes, PD centers around academic topics including the implementation of changing state and national curriculum standards. For this kind of focus, grade-level teams gather to discuss the standards of a given subject area and begin to develop common lessons and assessments. Most recently, teams created summative assessments to evaluate writing at all grade levels. Teachers were asked to design an assignment aligned with a grade-level writing rubric to provide a uniform assessment of elementary level writing across the district. Not all district-based PD is content-based. The social and emotional needs of students have also been a focus of the last two years of district-provided PD. Speakers have included experts on mental illness, Autism Spectrum Disorders, anxiety, and behavior management.

The second tier of professional development is building-based. Throughout the school year, the school’s staff is provided with PD designed through collaboration between the principal and the teaching staff that can be strategically aligned with the school’s needs. In the past, professional development around social issues such as gender identification and the use of a new social thinking curriculum were provided. The analysis of student MCAS testing data, and the creation of appropriate action plans, also takes place during building-based PD. Finally, designing school safety procedures including, for example, the development of lockdown protocols, are an important part of building-based PD.

The third tier of professional development occurs at the classroom level. Building upon district-provided and building-based PD, third tier PD focuses on classroom instruction and assessment. In order to develop pedagogical skills, teaching staff are encouraged to observe and be observed by peers. Additionally, many teachers work together on collaborative academic projects. For example, kindergarten, first, and third grade teachers attended a math seminar that addressed their shared number sense concerns.

The final tier of PD is determined by individual teachers. Every teacher is required to create both a professional practice goal and a student learning goal at the beginning of the school year. To address these goals, individual teachers attend professional workshops, complete graduate courses, and develop curriculum as needed. Administrators counsel and encourage teachers to not only choose professional development opportunities that are meaningful to their own professional growth, but also to keep the greater school community in mind when making those choices.

4. School Leadership:

Leadership at Westhampton Elementary School balances direct engagement and action on the part of the principal, with intentional distribution of decision-making authority to teachers based on their areas of interest and expertise. The result is an environment where collaboration is valued and sought, with direct action taken as needed on critical issues such as safety, discipline, and parent/staff relationships.

The small size of Westhampton Elementary School does not release it from the array of administrative leadership responsibilities found in today's schools. Unlike larger schools with administrative staffing which allows "spreading of the load" to assistant principals and business managers, all of these responsibilities fall on the principal at WES. This requires rigorous prioritization of tasks and generous engagement of teachers in many aspects of school leadership.

At this point, the current principal has hired all of the teaching and support staff in the school. This has been done first with an eye toward hiring well, and then supporting and cultivating talent, without impeding progress. In other words, the principal trusts talented staff to know and do their jobs and to work together to solve problems and reach goals. One result of this collaborative philosophy and less centralized structure is high investment on the part of all who are involved. Successful staff embrace opportunities to develop and refine their place in the school community. For staff, a supportive environment and the opportunity for ownership and recognition of effort, encourages willingness to tackle challenging projects.

Evidence of the staff-driven leadership described above can be seen in the following examples: the therapy dog reading program, the annual American history musical production, Literacy Night, Fifth Grade Poetry Café, Vocabulary Day, Communities of Practice, and the Green Team, (an educational program that helps kindergarteners, first graders, and teachers learn together about conserving energy and preventing pollution).

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Our school community is comprised of students, parents, faculty, and teachers who come from varying backgrounds, but we all work together towards the common goal of student success. The profound investment from the adult members of our school community to do their best and to work their hardest fosters a sense of value and safety in our students and models the growth mindset. This intentional investment results in a deep sense of belonging, and that sense of belonging is the most important aspect of any community. Fostering a strong sense of belonging is the strategy that has been most instrumental to Westhampton Elementary School's success. When a physical, academic, or emotional need is expressed by any member of our community, there is an "all-hands-on-deck" approach to meet that need. Examples of each of these types of need and the community's response to these needs are easy to find.

In the last few years, two families have had their homes destroyed by fires. The school joined the community to provide for these families. In response to these tragedies, fundraisers were held, bake sales were conducted, and toys and clothes were collected. When the hurricane devastated Puerto Rico and affected the extended family of one of our students, our response was to ask the community for donations that were then sent to Puerto Rico.

One of our academic needs became apparent when our MCAS ELA scores were not as high as expected. Actions taken to remedy the situation were intentional and rigorous. First, a reading specialist was hired; then, teachers in grades k-2 were trained in Orton-Gillingham. Since then, our reading scores have shown significant improvement.

There is one event that has emotional significance for the community, the Fall Festival. Each year the PTO hosts the Westhampton Fall Festival. Respected members of the community come to the common area to promote the event. Attending the Fall Festival is something that everyone in the community enjoys.

Every member of the Westhampton Elementary School chooses to be a team player because we share a set of moral standards that motivates each of us individually and benefits the greater good. The reward for that choice is being on a winning team, year after year. The fostering of a common mindset, which is that when people are in need, we help them, is without a doubt the most important practice that has made us who we are.