

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Dr. Andrew Perry

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

Official School Name Washington Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 900 St. Marks Avenue

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

Westfield NJ 07090-2039  
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Union County

Telephone (908) 789-4600

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Web site/URL  
https://washington.westfieldnj12.org  
g/\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail aperry@westfieldnj12.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\*Dr. Margaret Dolan

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail mdolan@westfieldnj12.org

District Name Westfield Public Schools Tel. (908) 789-4420

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. Peggy Oster

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

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

## Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 7 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 10 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	0	0	0
1	28	33	61
2	19	32	51
3	29	36	65
4	27	27	54
5	44	35	79
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	147	163	310

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 8 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 83 % White
  - 5 % 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: <1%

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	2
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	1
(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	312
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<1

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0%  
0 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Armenian, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Korean, Malayalam, Marathi, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish, Ukrainian

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 1%  
 Total number students who qualify: 2

8. Students receiving special education services: 20 %  
61 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>0</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>12</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>26</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>23</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 14
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	16
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	6

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 19:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	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.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school’s mission or vision statement.

Washington School will epitomize the effective school with a dedication to continuous improvement through advanced instructional strategies, techniques, and materials; a skilled energized staff, a clean, modern facility; and an involved, supportive community with a positive attitude toward learning and life.

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**

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Washington is one of six elementary schools serving students in grades one through five in the community of Westfield, New Jersey, located in Union County. We are nestled in a quiet, residential area of homes where parents are well-educated and dedicated to their children's school experience. Many families move to Westfield because of our excellent schools, and they are well-versed in the research concerning the benefits to students when parents are engaged in their school and education.

Westfield was originally named for the fields west of Elizabeth. It bears the marks of the Revolutionary War and has several famous sons and daughters, including Virginia Apgar (the Apgar Scale), Charles Addams (the Addams Family), and Paul Robeson (global activist). The present-day Washington School was built in 1955. Four classrooms were added in 1994 to accommodate increasing enrollment. The town has an early childhood center, two middle schools, and one high school.

Washington School is a perfect size. We have 310 students and three classes in each grade level one through five. We are a diverse school community, with many languages spoken in our homes, including Armenian, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Korean, Malayalam, Marathi, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish, and Ukrainian. Eighty three percent of our students are white, 8% are Asian, 4% Hispanic or Latino, and 5% two or more races. More than 60% of our teachers have advanced degrees.

We are a community of learners who believe that every child has the ability to succeed and has the right to an outstanding education. In partnership with families and the community, our district mission is “to educate all students to reach their highest potential as productive, well-balanced and responsible citizens who respect individual differences and diversity in an ever-changing world.”

Technology is used to connect children to each other and the world around them. All students and staff have access to their own laptop. An Instructional Technology Specialist assists and supports teachers and students within the classroom.

We meet the needs of our diverse learners. Special education teachers are available to assist children in our resource room and in the classroom. Students with exceptional learning potential meet with peers from other schools one day a week for academic challenges. Youngsters who need supplemental support participate in our Achieve remedial program, providing small group instructional time that targets areas in need of improvement.

We are introducing standards-based report cards to provide clearer goals for learning, more effective instruction, more detailed information and to foster a growth mindset for students and teachers. Standards-based grading helps to identify specific strengths and areas where improvement may be needed.

Children enjoy a large field with a running track, a playground with updated structures, and several other recreational spaces. Our school garden gives children the opportunity to get their hands dirty, plant seeds and flowers, harvest vegetables, and learn about earthworms and butterflies.

We welcome our incoming first graders with a beach party – a fun orientation session at which “firsties” and parents learn about our school, meet the teachers, and visit a classroom.

Fifth-grade students participate in a two-day overnight environmental trip to a YMCA camp. This event is chaperoned solely by faculty and helps to promote team building among the children and staff. Fifth graders also work in the school store to raise funds for a college scholarship awarded to a Washington School alumnus.

Washington School has a deep foundation in tradition. For 72 years and counting, our parents have written, produced and performed an off-Broadway-level extravaganza called The Washington School Show. This event is our biggest fundraiser and helps the PTO finance a plethora of student activities, state-of-the-art

equipment, and support materials.

The show is just one of the ways in which parents are woven throughout the school's many activities. Our parents are the silk strings in the fabric of our school. They organize and run countless events that enhance our school, including afterschool enrichment; science and math nights; a book fair and holiday craft fair; art appreciation; clubs for Scrabble, Chess and running; drug, food allergy, and nutritional awareness initiatives; family Bingo night; and organizing food baskets for families in need during the holidays. Washington parents also provide valuable information about the community to new families.

The staff at Washington School has remained stable over the years and our student mobility rate is low. This contributes to the sense of community and friendly climate of our school. We set high expectations for all students while respecting and accommodating diverse individual needs. It is this sense of community that truly makes Washington School "A Great Place to Grow."

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

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

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

The English/language arts curriculum encompasses reading, writing, speaking, and listening while allowing students to clearly, strategically, critically, and creatively convey their thinking. Instruction is guided by the Reading and Writing Workshop framework through whole class, small group, and individual opportunities. Teachers differentiate their instruction, utilizing an assortment of reading assessments including Fountas and Pinnell. Reading materials for various skill levels and grade level novels include informational and literary texts. Students focus on supporting their ideas and inferences using text evidence.

Pupils are engaged in a multi-sensory approach to spelling and phonemic instruction. Through integrated word study practices, utilizing Foundations, the Wilson Reading System, and Words Their Way, students gain an understanding of phonemic awareness, phonics, and spelling. Vocabulary is integrated throughout the content areas to deepen understanding and promote academic language.

Various grade levels explore different writing genres with an emphasis on narrative and informational text. Mentor texts allow students to examine the writer's craft and to use written expression and strong vocabulary to convey thoughts, ideas, and emotions in their own writing. Revision and editing strategies are individualized to help each learner become proficient and independent in the writing process.

Published authors visit our school every year. Children learn how different writers approach their craft and what perseverance really means. A Poet-in-Residence works with third, fourth and fifth-grade classes annually in the art of poetry and storytelling.

Fountas and Pinnell assessments help us track each student's fluency, accuracy and comprehension. They help us determine what books the students can read independently and allow teachers to plan instruction at the appropriate level.

The Independent Reading Assessment helps us assess students' comprehension across the strands of plot and setting, character, vocabulary and figurative language, and themes and ideas. We use the Informal Reading Inventory to check comprehension at each grade level. The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills is another tool we use to check for fluency, comprehension, phonetic sounds, patterns and skills.

We evaluate student thinking by asking them to complete "write longs" based on their reading and notetaking. We check understanding through small group observations and individual conferences.

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

As detailed in the New Jersey Mathematics Curriculum Framework, the importance of mathematics in the development of civilization and culture and its relevance to students' success regardless of career path is addressed throughout the elementary mathematics program. All students have access to high quality, engaging instruction in mathematics and computer science in preparation for a society increasingly dominated by quantitative methods, data, and technology. Emphasis is placed on the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, particularly through the use of everyday contexts and real-world applications. Each student has access to online materials both in the classroom and at home, as well as a Chromebook in the classroom.

Our elementary curriculum is organized by the content domains of counting and cardinality; operations and algebraic thinking; number and operations; measurement and data; and geometry. Learning progresses within these domains for each grade level. Students learn multiple methods and strategies in each domain to arrive at a conclusion.

In first grade instructional time is focused on strategies for addition and subtraction and developing an understanding of whole number relationships and place value. Standard units of measure, as well as describing and analyzing shapes, are concepts learned in second grade. Third graders discover the world of fractions, strategies for multiplication and division, and the structure of rectangular arrays. In fourth grade pupils learn about adding and subtracting fractions, multi-digit multiplication and finding quotients involving multi-digit dividends. Multiplication and division of fractions is introduced in grade five, along with decimals, and learning about volume.

Lessons are tiered and provide differentiated options based on the specific needs of each student for the standard being addressed. In addition to frequent informal opportunities for “kid watching,” every lesson offers an assessment check-in to gauge student performance on one or more of the standards.

Teachers create units that utilize both pre-assessments and summative assessments as well as state standardized testing to guide instruction and differentiate accordingly. Results are analyzed at the class, grade, and building levels for areas where improvement may be needed.

Washington School teachers host an annual Math Night for students and parents to enjoy interesting, creative, and fun activities based on the lessons taught in the classroom. Teachers also sponsor math enrichment activities during lunch hour as well as early morning review sessions.

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

The Washington School science program fosters students’ curiosity about the natural world and provides them with skills to plan and carry out investigations. Students are provided with foundational concept knowledge in the areas of physical science, earth and space science, life science and engineering practice. The curricula focus on authentic hands-on experiences that allow students to develop their ability to question, reason, argue and communicate their findings. All objectives are aligned and derived from the Next Generation Science Standards. Teachers use a variety of instructional approaches including inquiry-based discovery and the investigation process around the framework of Claim-Evidence-Reasoning. Science Night, run by teachers and parents, is a fun and educational evening that fosters a love of learning through hands-on activities, such as using magnets to separate the iron in breakfast cereal, extracting DNA from strawberries, and using a Van de Graaff generator to make hair stand on end. Our teachers serve as instructors in the district’s summer STEM Camp and are certified as science instructors through the Full Option Science System (FOSS).

Some favorite science lessons include examining the life cycle of a mealworm and the structures and behaviors of crayfish, the workings of a parachute and mirrors and light, and how to build an electromagnet and construct simple circuits while identifying materials that are conductors and insulators.

We assess our children in science using observations during experiments, evidence of knowledge during class discussions, written responses in science notebooks and cumulative exams.

Eighty one percent of our fourth graders scored in the advanced proficient range on the most recent NJ science assessment. Twenty eight percent of these were perfect scores.

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

Our social studies curriculum enables students to explore how individuals recognize, develop and maintain their personal identity in a society in order to understand relationships and interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.

Students begin their study with their role within family, school, and community, and then identify similarities and differences with others around the world. Students progress to compare and contrast communities around the world, past and present. The environment and global citizenship are a part of the social studies curriculum. In the upper grades, students study the five regions of the United States, including a close examination of New Jersey and its role and influence in shaping America; the Age of Exploration

and how it influenced the establishment of North American colonies; the five themes of geography; and how environmental and natural resources contribute to the development of culture. Students also study how belief systems impact and shape social interaction and daily lives.

Instructional approaches used include explicit instruction, small-group instruction, problem-based learning, differentiated instruction, independent research and presentations, and technology-based support including online texts. Class trips provide hands-on learning experiences, with visits to the four centuries old Miller-Cory House, the Red Mill Museum Village, the Westfield Memorial Library, and various Monmouth County Parks. Formative assessments include student interactive notebooks and class participation; summative assessments include end of unit assessments and presentations.

**1e. For secondary schools:**

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

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Washington School students love to perform. All participate in weekly 45-minute general music classes with such curricular themes throughout the year as pitch and melody, rhythm and tempo, style and form, tone color and timbre, and dynamics and texture. Holiday singalongs provide opportunities for students to perform for family and friends. Fourth and fifth graders elect to participate in band or orchestra, which includes weekly 30-minute lessons. Fifth-grade students also participate in the chorus, which meets every week. Each ensemble performs Winter and Spring concerts. Another proud moment for fifth graders is the chance to sing the National Anthem for the area's minor league baseball team.

The school's art program emphasizes developing foundational skills in the elements and principles of design while presenting concepts that inspire creativity and imagination. Every class has a weekly 45-minute art lesson, fostering personal growth and collaboration. Unit studies about place, time, and culture allow students to experience a wide variety of art media. Concepts in aesthetics and art history are explored through a spiraling curriculum that builds in complexity each year. Completed artwork is displayed regularly throughout the school and at many venues across the district including the Board of Education building, local businesses during Youth Art Month, the annual district art show, and online in an extensive digital gallery. Students' artistic progress is perhaps most evident at the annual fifth grade graduation where students proudly display their first and fifth grade self-portraits.

The physical education program sets the foundation for students to lead healthy and active lifestyles, gain confidence, and make competent decisions on health and wellness. This approach is based on a multitude of fitness activities and games, along with team-building initiatives that help young learners work together. All students attend 30-minute sessions twice a week. Washington School's physical education teacher presents a workshop on Fundamental Integrative Training (FIT) at regional and national conferences, collaborates with local universities, and has successfully written several Westfield Education Foundation grants.

Health and wellness needs are met by a certified, full-time school nurse. Third and fourth graders examine their physical, social, and emotional selves; fifth graders focus on hygiene and body changes during puberty.

Students also attend a weekly 30-minute class dedicated to library instruction with a certified media specialist. Instruction focuses on 21st-Century skills and incorporates the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Standards Framework for Learners. Students are evaluated on their progress in library media skills. Digital Citizenship instruction begins in third grade to promote responsible online etiquette. Students utilize an online public access catalog to locate materials within the library. Washington's Read-a-thon during Read Across America Week generates a lot of excitement and promotes a year-round love of reading.

Students begin to explore the Spanish language and culture once a week for 30 minutes in third grade; fourth and fifth graders have two, 30-minute classes each week. Through songs, games, conversation, and stories, students are introduced to Spanish, continuing to build their skills and knowledge of the language in the upper grades using interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational modes of communication. The Pledge of Allegiance is recited in the morning in both English and Spanish. The annual Café Cultural displays a variety of fifth grade Spanish projects along with a multicultural food court.

Technology is infused in all content areas through a 1:1 laptop environment. Students use Google Classroom for classroom assignments. High-resolution, interactive projectors with whiteboards, document cameras, Apple TVs, and sound field systems are available in every classroom and are used daily. Students are exposed to makerspace, coding, and word processing/typing activities.

The school's guidance counselor visits classrooms to encourage kindness, friendship, bullying prevention, and problem-solving skills. Students participate in activities that foster positive relationships across grade levels, such as the book buddy program and fifth-grade helpers. The counselor organizes a school-wide Week of Respect during October that includes activities, displays, and special announcements. The counselor is available for students who need individual support on a consistent basis.

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

Washington School – indeed the entire district – believes that no two students learn in the same way. This philosophy guides how we teach students with diverse learning styles.

The school provides a continuum of service for special education students that includes in-class support and resource room replacement subjects. Related services include speech articulation and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, adaptive physical education, audiological services, and behavioral plans.

A Child Study Team, comprised of a learning consultant, psychologist, and social worker, spends one day a week at the school observing students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and consulting with teachers. During the first week of school, the Child Study Team meets with each teacher to review students who have an IEP.

For students requiring additional academic support, a full-time remedial teacher is available for reading, writing and math assistance, both in class and in a separate remedial/resource room. Integration is seamless between classroom, remedial, and resource room instruction where lessons are consistent in each location.

An intervention team meets regularly to brainstorm ideas that may help a particular student. The individual team includes the principal, guidance counselor, classroom teacher, remedial teacher, learning consultant, and the student's parents. The group recommends strategies and supports that can be utilized in the regular education setting. The school offers accommodations or modifications to students who may need help demonstrating what they know.

Additionally, an Extended School Year (ESY) program helps children maintain their gains over the summer months. Third graders also participate in the "Kids on the Block" program which provides real-life scenarios using puppetry "to educate children about social concerns and differences, giving them the skills they need to stay safe and healthy."

Every student is assessed to determine whether they need supplemental services. Children demonstrating intellectual readiness are offered programs that provide them with continuous academic growth as well as support in the areas of social and emotional development. Washington School also provides academic enrichment opportunities for all students, such as lunch enrichment challenges, and whole class academic lessons where the gifted teacher and classroom teachers collaborate.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### **1. School Climate/Culture:**

A culture of kindness and caring at Washington School drives all of our work. Children learn best when they are listened to and understood and their strengths are acknowledged.

Such offerings as “Teacher Treasures” give students an opportunity to interact with staff during the school day and beyond. For example, a student might enjoy being “PE Teacher of the Day,” designing a birthday bulletin board with a staff member, seeing how a fire drill is activated, or having breakfast with a teacher.

Washington School sponsors several charity events during the school year. They include a 5th grade “Wax Museum” fundraiser and operating a school store to raise money for a college scholarship for a Washington School alum.

In addition, there are many special occasions such as school spirit days, a talent show and a last day of school “clap-out” for our oldest students to say goodbye. There are birthday announcements each morning along with a “Civics Question of the Day.”

Social and Emotional Learning is an important focus in the Westfield Public School District. At Washington School, there are many initiatives and lessons to help a student, for example, learn how to settle a dispute, to summon the courage to try again, or to pause and think before acting. Washington’s social and emotional learning focuses on students and adults alike managing stress and anxiety with the tools of guided relaxation, imagery, and attention to breathing.

The “Trouble-Free Playground Program” during daily recess utilizes games that focus on teamwork and inclusion.

Professional surveys of students, parents, and teachers have been a helpful tool to measure perceptions of teaching and learning as well as school climate.

Washington teachers feel motivated and supported in an environment that values creativity, curiosity, and understanding of individual needs. The master schedule includes common planning time for each grade level. Innovative and creative professional development opportunities are available at the district and school levels. The principal and PTO demonstrate their appreciation and support by providing a myriad of supplementary resources for our classrooms as well as through special luncheons. After school social activities such as yoga and escape room mysteries enhance friendships and create a family-like atmosphere.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

The close relationship between school and community has a direct impact on the growth and success of each student.

The day before each school year begins, students and parents are invited to meet their teacher and classmates and visit their classroom. This helps students look forward to the first day. An annual Back to School Night for parents is held with nearly 100% attendance.

In addition, Washington School hosts a community service night when families have the opportunity to engage in simple, kid-friendly service projects to help the school crossing guards and local service organizations. Parents also visit classes to be a mystery reader or to share their family’s holiday traditions.

Additional community outreach includes a charity volleyball game, packing extra lunches for those in need, and collection boxes in the school lobby for such worthy causes as toiletries for the troops. There is a backpack program that provides easy-to-prepare packets of food for the weekends for children who receive free or reduced-price meals during the school day. The school partners with the Westfield Police and Fire

Departments and the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association to provide educational opportunities such as assemblies and writing contests. The Rotary Club of Westfield sponsors the annual Philhower Award for a teacher that has demonstrated outstanding elementary teaching; Washington School has had four Philhower Fellows.

For seventy-two years, the school community has gathered to write, produce, choreograph, design and perform an original Washington School Show. Participation in this treasured tradition fosters relationships among parents, teachers and alumni. The show raises funds to provide students with updated technology, classroom materials, and assemblies. The show is an annual favorite of students and their family and friends.

A special tradition at Washington School is recognizing graduating Westfield High School seniors who return in their caps and gowns to their elementary alma mater to walk through the halls again, be recognized for their achievement, and serve as models of success for our students.

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

Professional development is essential to teacher growth and student success. New teachers and veteran teachers alike continually advance their skills and abilities.

The district's New Staff Institute (NSI) forms separate cohorts for first and second year teachers new to the district. The new staff receives instruction from established staff members for three days before the school year begins. Novice teachers are assigned a mentor for the first year; the cohorts meet every month the first year and every 2 months the second year to focus on timely topics.

Districtwide in-service professional days for all teaching staff and paraprofessionals are held twice a year. Past topics have included the Next Generation Science Standards, Readers-Writers Workshop, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), and fostering a growth mindset. Outside consultants at these professional learning sessions provide strategies on a variety of topics each year while district teachers share their instructional expertise on dyslexia, behavior management, technology, and other subjects. The in-service presentations are chosen specifically with both staff and students in mind. Best practices, new technologies, helpful strategies all provide teachers with additional learning that they, in turn, can utilize in their classrooms to enhance learning for their students.

The Washington School third grade team currently is working with Columbia University on a new, hands-on math pilot. In addition, two teachers serve as literacy coaches. The school welcomes and mentors student teachers and interns who share new and innovative ideas in education. Grade level teams analyze data from both state and building level assessments to create Professional Improvement Plans (PIP) and Student Growth Objectives (SGOs).

Every teacher is provided funds to attend an out-of-district workshop or conference annually. Tuition reimbursement helps defray the costs of graduate courses while professional development courses are offered by the district after school and during the summer. Throughout the school year, teachers are given opportunities to observe other classrooms to learn from each other.

An instructional technology support teacher, master technology teacher, and technician provide ongoing training throughout the school year along with daily support on Google Classroom, web page design, and educational software and applications including Newsela, BrainPop, and Discovery Education.

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

The Westfield Public School District believes that leadership is not solely the responsibility of its administrators. At Washington School, staff members willingly serve on committees to tackle such tasks as revising curriculum and reviewing report card language. They act as liaisons with the superintendent, the principal and the parent community and assume vital roles as members of the School Improvement Panel (SIP) and the Safety Committee. The teaching staff run security drills, chair school-wide events, take the

lead on various staff meeting topics, and enjoy participating in the annual charity volleyball game.

Most important, Washington teachers serve as crucial role models for their students who display leadership qualities of their own, with upper grade students mentoring their younger schoolmates.

The Washington School principal performs a myriad of administrative duties while supporting the staff and students. The principal routinely visits classrooms and remains accessible. He meets weekly with the principals of the district's other five elementary schools and one early childhood center. The principal also meets routinely with the superintendent, district supervisors and principals of all 10 schools to share similar and differing approaches to common issues in their buildings.

Grade level meetings between Washington School teachers and the principal are held to review standardized testing results, discussing and analyzing where the school's instruction is succeeding and where it might be improved. Teachers grade each other's assessments as a practice exercise to be sure that grading and expectations are consistent.

Collaborative leadership continues as Washington School staff work with the principal to develop class lists and student groupings for each school year. District supervisors observe in the classrooms and organize districtwide, grade level meetings to encourage best practices and collaboration in grade level curriculum.

The shared leadership model is successful at Washington School because the staff and principal share the common goal of putting students first.

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

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The single most important component of the many attributes that contribute to academic success at Washington Elementary School is the focus on empowering and preparing its students for lifelong success.

The faculty creates a love of learning and places an emphasis for students on the power of resilience, establishing an environment where students feel safe to take risks. Individual differences and diversity are embraced and respected.

Teachers get to know students on both an academic and personal level, allowing for tailored instruction that is relevant, engaging and enjoyable. There is a strong teacher-student bond at Washington School; students feel comfortable approaching their instructors for support in any given area. Teachers, in turn, can then engage and challenge each student while recognizing a child's specific strengths and areas where improvement may be needed.

Student-led parent teacher conferences also teach young learners how to evaluate their own progress and to set reasonable short and long term goals.

Each year, students combine technology, reading, writing, and research skills with oral presentations to create a final product that is unique to the grade level. First graders research an animal and write their own "animal book" while second graders present a digital slide show about a U.S. president they have researched. In third grade, students research and share the biography of a remarkable woman in history and, in fourth grade, Genius Hour encourages investigation, exploration, and wonder. Fifth graders host a living "Wax Museum," to celebrate their research skills, character study and oral presentation. All of these projects share a common element of helping students to develop the tools for lifelong learning.

Extracurricular activities that align with the curriculum also provide opportunities for student learning and growth. A fifth grade overnight field trip to a YMCA environmental camp is filled with learning experiences, from what to pack to building a shelter to stay warm and safe in the woods. The fifth graders work as a team to accomplish various tasks and challenges, using what they have learned since they first entered Washington School as first graders. Because only staff members chaperone the fifth grade outing, that special teacher-student bond is further solidified as chaperones from all grade levels -- fine arts, physical education, nurse, guidance and the principal -- enjoy observing the growth that has taken place in these students.

At Washington School, a teacher supports a colleague; a student supports a classmate and they all support each other. It is this collaboration of spirit, of determination, of grit that is the bedrock of academic success at Washington School. And it is that willingness of both student and teacher to give 100% every day that will ensure student success long after our fifth graders move on to middle school and beyond.