

U.S. Department of Education
2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name John D. Hardy Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 293 Weston Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Wellesley State MA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 02482-4531

County Norfolk County

Telephone (781) 446-6270 Fax (781) 263-1523

Web site/URL https://wellesleyps.org/hardy/ E-mail smithg@wellesleyps.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. David Lussier E-mail lussierd@wellesleyps.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Wellesley Public School District Tel. (781) 446-6210

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Ms. Linda Chow
(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, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The electronic signature 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 2021 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
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 current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools.)

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not the district.)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
 Suburban
 Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	22	10	32
1	12	17	29
2	14	21	35
3	22	21	43
4	15	21	36
5	22	26	48
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	107	116	223

*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
 - 27 % Asian
 - 3 % Black or African American
 - 6 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 50 % White
 - 14 % 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 2019 - 2020 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, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	2
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 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, 2019	256
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

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

Spanish, Portuguese, Hungarian, Swedish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Norwegian, Haitian Creole, Hebrew, Japanese, French

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 8 %
17 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 8 %

Total number students who qualify: 17

8. Students receiving special education services: 17 %
38 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. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>4</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>8</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>7</u> Developmental Delay | <u>5</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>4</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>8</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>2</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: 1
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	12
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	12
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.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 19:1

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

Required Information	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	96%	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 2020.

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.

Hardy School's mission is best reflected in Wellesley Public School's mission. Wellesley Public Schools exist to provide a high quality, comprehensive educational experience that supports each student’s academic, social, and emotional development and prepares them to be global citizens who are college, career, and life ready.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

Throughout a majority of the 2020-2021 school year, we employed a hybrid model. As part of this model, Kindergarten through second grade students were present for four full days of in-person instruction (Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri) and attended one half day of remote instruction (Wed). Third through fifth grade students attended in-person for two full days (either Monday/Thursday or Tuesday/Friday) and attended two and a half days of remote instruction (the full days of remote instruction were on the opposite days from their in-person days; all students attended one half day of remote instruction on Wed.). Vulnerable populations, such as students receiving special education or EL services, were phased in from hybrid to four in-person days starting in December. As of the first week in April, we transitioned to a full return to in-person learning for all students.

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

PART III - SUMMARY

The John D. Hardy School is located in Wellesley, Massachusetts, a suburban community located thirteen miles west of Boston. Hardy School first welcomed students in 1923, and was named after John D. Hardy, the chairman of the town's Building Committee at the time, who was instrumental in the school's inception.

Hardy School is part of the Wellesley Public Schools and is one of seven elementary schools within the district. Hardy School serves 223 students. The Wellesley Public Schools is part of the METCO (Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity) program. METCO is a school integration program that creates opportunities for students to experience the advantages of learning and working in a racially and ethnically diverse setting. Included in our student body are 15 students who are part of the METCO program.

One of the unique characteristics of Hardy School is our rich diversity. The school's racial makeup includes students who are 50% White, 27% Asian, 6% Hispanic, 3% African-American, and 14% Multi-Race. We also have 11 different languages spoken within our community.

A key strategy that enables students to develop to their full potential is a focus on continuous improvement of teaching and learning via a strong coaching model. A full-time math coach/specialist and full-time literacy coach/specialist work closely with teachers in planning for instruction, modeling best-practices, observing and offering feedback, and supporting teachers in meeting the needs of all students. Hardy School also has a strong SSP (Student Support Process) and RTI (Response to Intervention) block. The SSP process is designed to look at a student holistically in order to identify strategies and accommodations to increase success in the general education setting. Comprehensive documentation, monitoring, and assessment is used to determine meaningful evidence of progress. The RTI block allows students to work with peers to receive academic or social-emotional intervention as part of our general education program.

In an effort to support the health and social-emotional well-being of our students, we have created a number of noteworthy programs. Connection Counts involves matching volunteer staff members to students who would blossom with additional adult connections to support social-emotional wellness. Nutrition and wellness are promoted through initiatives that encourage healthy lifestyle choices, eating fruits and vegetables and daily exercise. Hardy students who are part of the METCO program meet regularly with staff who provide space for affinity group time, mentorship and support.

Another strategy key to student success is Project Based Learning (PBL), a highly engaging way to integrate and investigate content via real-world context and a call to action. Teachers create PBL units that challenge students to engage in problem solving around complex questions and to teach others via public sharing or performance.

The unique character of Hardy School can be seen in several distinctive annual special events; one of these has now been adopted as a district-wide elementary family event. In celebration of the rich diversity within our community, we hold a Multicultural Festival; students learn about different cultures, traditions and languages through displays, dance presentations and food tastings. Hardy School has a strong and supportive Parent Teacher Organization that provides both academic enrichment opportunities and community building activities to our students. The PTO has a robust Creative Arts and Sciences Program (CAS) that offers both school-based workshops and performances for students. In addition, they plan many community building events each year including: late summer meet and greets, movie and bingo nights, 5th grade childcare during back-to-school evenings and outreach to neighboring organizations serving older adults.

Finally, Hardy School has a distinctive school-wide social competency framework known as R.I.S.E. Hardy School encourages members of our community to R.I.S.E. to responsible behavior. This acronym stands for: Respect others, Include all, Show safe behavior, and Encourage all to participate and solve problems. The concepts of R.I.S.E., reinforced in the classrooms, hallways, and playground, help to contribute to a positive school climate.

At Hardy, we see the combination of these practices, programs, and frameworks as being instrumental in addressing the goal of teaching to the whole-child, something we believe is essential to student success.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Hardy School’s curriculum is derived from the Wellesley Public School’s core values of academic excellence, commitment to community, respect for human differences and caring and cooperative relationships. We strive to inspire critical thinkers, problem-solvers, artists and innovators who will make contributions to our school community and the wider world. In each content area our curriculum is aligned with the Massachusetts State Curriculum Frameworks for that discipline.

The content areas of reading, writing and math are taught through a workshop approach; we believe the gradual release of responsibility fosters engagement, agency and independence. Regardless of which content area, Hardy students engage in discourse; we believe in the power of student voice and choice and leverage this in our teaching by providing instruction at every grade level in accountable talk. Trained in Project Based Learning by Buck Institute/PBL Works, we use this framework to design and implement rigorous, authentic standard-based projects that integrate curricula and engage students over an extended period of time. We teach students to give ideas not answers, respect others, share the airtime, listen with an open mind and recognize that mistakes are opportunities to learn.

The backbone of our ELA curriculum is Teachers’ College Reading and Writing Project Units of Study which engages students in productive reading, thinking, talking and writing about texts across genres. Our focus on phonemic awareness in kindergarten and the implementation of Wilson Languages’s Foundations in grades K-2 ensure that students have the skills needed for decoding and encoding. Time for independent reading is an essential literacy practice and students develop stamina for uninterrupted reading from 20 minutes in Kindergarten to 50 minutes in grade 5. Aligned to our focus on discourse is the practice of “interactive read aloud.” Beginning in Kindergarten, we teach active listening, elaboration, flexible thinking, respectful disagreement and empathy; these skills are put to work discussing and analyzing fiction, nonfiction books, poems and digital texts. At every grade, we expose students to current books by powerful authors. The Wellesley Public School’s curriculum encourages us to explore books that cover complex and important topics such as diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) and gender identity and expression (GI&E).

Our math curriculum, Investigations in Number, Data, and Space, is built on a belief that conceptual understanding requires active learner participation, communication, collaboration and reflection. It fosters student curiosity coupled with competence in math skills and strength in reasoning. Each fall we re-establish our school-wide mathematics community with Jo Bolar’s Week of Inspirational Math; students participate in guided exploration and discussion of problems that have multiple answers and varied methods for reaching solutions.

Hardy educators view every student through the lens of shared responsibility; data provides opportunity for collective inquiry and collaborative action. We use formative assessments and student observation to monitor learning and provide timely, relevant, individualized feedback. Staff trained in Datawise and Professional Learning Communities support others and create a culture of action research and celebration of success. In reading, formative assessment data is gathered by teaching teams and analyzed three times each year. Literacy screening and assessments include: Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (BAS), The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and Foundations end-of-unit assessments. Each unit of study in reading and writing begins and ends with performance assessment tasks; these serve as the basis for goal setting and written documentation of student growth. In math, student work helps us make daily instructional decisions, while end-of-unit tests provide summative information and opportunity for targeted re-teaching. A numeracy screening employed three times each year K-3 provides data on students’ development of conceptual mathematical ideas.

Science exploration at Hardy relies on asking questions, defining problems, constructing explanations and engaging in argument from evidence, all of which is aligned with our school wide focus on student discourse. Each unit has relevance to real-world application; students engage in hands-on exploration, gather data to develop models and apply lessons learned to novel situations. On a visit to K-5 classrooms one might see 1st grade students becoming puppet theater engineers to study light and sound, or 4th grade students

exploring the forces that change our Earth's surface in order to design earthquake resistant buildings, or 5th grade students exploring ecological interdependence by creating healthy eco-columns and experiments to examine and mitigate the effects of everyday pollutants. As social scientists and citizens of our community, students generate, investigate and discuss questions of interest, use simulation and role-play, engage in service-learning projects and grapple with current events and social justice issues. On a visit to K-5 classrooms one might see kindergarten students exploring classroom democracy or grade 5 students writing and producing plays depicting the Modern Civil Rights Movement. PBL enables us to create authentic products as we explore topics through various social, historical, political, and cultural perspectives. In doing so, we believe our students develop empathy, a more nuanced understanding of the past and an appreciation of individual efficacy.

Distanced Learning evolved for Hardy School in this unprecedented year; during the initial shut-down we provided students with asynchronous lessons and synchronous small group time with teachers. We used online platforms (Seesaw K-2 and Google Classroom 3-5) to organize, manage and provide feedback on student work. By mid-fall 2020-2021, we transitioned into full in-person K-2 and hybrid 3-5; our full return of all students 5 days/week began in April 2021. Hybrid learning brought us many lessons on: the value of community, ways we maximize opportunities for collaboration and the myriad of technology possibilities. Pandemic teaching required us to find patience for ourselves and our students; as adult learners we learned to stretch and reinvigorate a growth mindset. We approached each teaching day with humility, flexibility, accountability and deliberate creativity in how we connect, provide feedback and communicate with each other.

1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At Hardy, students in all grades participate in Physical Education (PE), Spanish FLES (Foreign Language for Elementary Students), Library, Music, and Visual Art. Each of these curriculum areas supports our students' acquisition of essential skills and knowledge in life-long, beneficial ways. Kindergarten and 1st grade students attend Music and PE twice a week. All students participate in weekly Art Library and FLES classes. For this year's hybrid model, specialists created engaging asynchronous video lessons so students were able to access specialist classes weekly, even when they were learning from home. At Hardy, we acknowledge the unique value of the specialist-student relationship; being a part of shaping students' lives over six years allows for deep SEL impact to flourish. These ongoing connections with students and families create a meaningful support system within our community.

Students learn the importance of physical exercise and nutritional health by participating in PE class; the Hardy playground has plenty of open space so many PE experiences are held outdoors in the fresh air. Each year students celebrate the Boston Marathon with our own Mini-Marathon where each class works together to run a total of 26.2 miles. Students are introduced to a range of equipment including scooters, snowshoes and a rock climbing wall. A unique choice-driven Field Day closes out each school year; Hardy staff and parent volunteers work together to provide more than 30 activities for students to choose from, allowing them to celebrate with freedom of voice and choice. Holistic health and wellness are fostered through Strive for Five (which encourages students to eat five fruits and/or vegetables each day), Exercise Across America (the tally of miles traveled in a school year) and monthly Walk to School Days. In 2020-2021, extra emphasis was placed on ways to stay active when learning from home, such as stretching during learning breaks or taking a nature walk.

Wellesley's Spanish FLES program was piloted at Hardy and over the past six years the program has grown from teaching just a few grade levels to all students K-5. Some of the highlights of FLES are: lessons that

support core grade level curriculum, a focus on respect for all cultures and language learning with a growth mindset. Songs and music are employed and classes are lively and fun. Since students could not sing at school in 2020-2021, teachers made videos of songs in Spanish for sing-along at home.

Library classes strive to develop a love of books of all genres, to expose students to inclusive and diverse literature and to teach students how to access books with ease. An essential aspect of the Library curriculum is the development of students' research skills beginning in 1st grade; students are introduced to a collection of research databases to enable them to locate materials with growing independence. To accommodate this year's hybrid model, Hardy's librarian made it possible for students to safely browse and check out books from both their classrooms and their homes.

Hardy's music curriculum seamlessly combines music and movement so students experience music learning in a kinesthetic way. Concepts explored include musical form, tempo, and timbre. All students look forward to exploring rap music's history and structure in 5th grade; this unit culminates with students writing and sharing rap compositions. They participate also in chorus, exploring different genres such as jazz, reggae, soul, mariachi, hip hop, and various types of music from India.

In Visual Art, Hardy students explore various two-dimensional and three-dimensional art making techniques including drawing, painting, collaging, printmaking, pottery and sculpture. Technology is incorporated through digital photography and stop-motion animation on iPads. Our curriculum puts strong emphasis on exposure to diverse artists, art history and contemporary art. Opportunities for extracurricular activities such as Open Studio and Before School Art Clubs have been supported by parents and Hardy's PTO.

3. Academic Supports:

It is a collective priority that Hardy students receive what they need to be successful; as a staff we carefully tailor instruction, use interventions and monitor progress to achieve this goal.

Formative assessments enable teachers to monitor student understanding in all core subjects. If a student demonstrates stalled progress, classroom teachers begin by providing accommodations within the classroom in small group or 1:1 to target the area(s) of need. Outside of the classroom, reading intervention is provided by the literacy coach/specialist and paraprofessionals using Fountas and Pinnell's Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) and Wilson Language's Foundations and Just Words for instruction. In many cases, these research based supports will accelerate skill development in reading and writing. Similarly, the math coach/specialist works with teachers to differentiate from within the Investigations math program, taking small groups for targeted skill work, as needed.

Formative assessments can reveal student performance that is above the grade level benchmark, as well. Classroom teachers routinely tailor small group instruction to meet the needs of these learners. In Literacy, for example, students are offered text choices to match their instructional levels and interests. Learning continuums in reading and writing enable teachers to set goals that move each student forward. In Math, classroom teachers provide students with the Open Middle curriculum to push them into thinking more deeply about mathematical concepts and relationships.

For students who are not making effective progress with classroom interventions, Hardy's Student Support Process (SSP) Team will meet to review, problem solve, suggest next steps and support the progress monitoring of targeted interventions. After six weeks, SSP will reconvene to analyze data and determine next steps for the child, often setting a new goal and suggesting new interventions. Should the Team feel that the child has a suspected disability, they refer the student to the special education team.

At Hardy, 17% of our population receive special education services. Students belong to an

inclusion classroom and receive specially designed instruction based on their individual needs detailed in their IEPs. These services take place in their classroom and in Hardy's Learning Center. Many students are successful participating in the same curriculum as their grade-level peers with accommodations, modifications and preview/review of material. For other students, alternate curriculum is used to better meet their needs. In Literacy, special educators have access to the Wilson Reading System, Wilson's branches: Fluency and Just Words, LLI, Explode the Code, and Framing Your Thoughts. For Math, special educators may design instruction using Bridges, Saxon, and Do the Math. Special educators and classroom teachers consult one time per week to speak exclusively about these students, their instruction and progress.

A smaller, yet integral part of Hardy is our EL student body, making up 8% of our population. Hardy prides itself on being one of four elementary schools in Wellesley to instruct EL students. Prior to their arrival, students of multilingual homes are screened to determine if they qualify for this support. This screening determines their initial WIDA level (1-6) and every January students are assessed using ACCESS to measure language growth. Hardy has two EL teachers who instruct both in and out of the classroom based on the individual needs of the child. Accommodations are made within the classroom, so that students can access the core curriculum.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

At Hardy, we believe strong relationships are critical in engaging students in learning and building a positive school environment. Students who have strong peer and teacher relationships feel safe taking risks, will share ideas and provide constructive feedback to support personal and peer growth. Hardy’s unique core values of “R.I.S.E.,” are embedded in everything we do. Our school has a long standing commitment to social emotional learning (SEL) and mindfulness via the Open Circle Curriculum. The common language of Open Circle and R.I.S.E. serve as a framework for learning conversations with students.

Hardy prides itself on ensuring students feel valued, seen and respected. The challenges of remote and hybrid learning have provided our staff with an opportunity to develop new ways to support, motivate and engage our students. One new initiative is Connections Count: a system created to provide an extra safety net for the most vulnerable in our school. Staff volunteers are matched to students to visit their classrooms, celebrate their academic and social successes and develop a trusting relationship aimed at supporting their social/emotional and academic growth.

In this year of distanced and hybrid teaching, Hardy staff embraced technology such as Flipgrid, Padlet, Nearpod and Jamboard. Flipgrid was utilized as a tool to enhance social relationships and as a learning platform. To build cross-grade relationships, fifth graders made videos to introduce themselves to their Kindergarten buddies. The Hardy staff used Flipgrid to make book introduction videos to engage students with new texts. Teachers turned to Zoom breakout rooms to connect their “at home” and “in-person” cohorts for science experiments, book clubs and math activities. Teachers in grades K-2 used the Seesaw platform to differentiate lessons and engage and empower students to share their learning using voice, video or drawings.

Due to social distancing protocols, our school-wide monthly assemblies were delivered virtually this year. Each month a different grade level interviewed a “mystery teacher” and created a video that both highlighted our core values and shared a grade level project. These leadership opportunities motivated students and enhanced a positive school community. Fifth grade students were given an additional leadership role to brainstorm ideas for new spirit days to promote joy and community building in 2020-2021.

Hardy School sets high standards for student achievement. Students’ continued success is the result of a student-centered, warm and caring school environment that promotes student voice and choice. At every grade level, PBL experiences are highly engaging and make room for a variety of modes of expression and the development of strengths and a growth mindset among students and staff alike. This reinforces student achievement because individuals with a growth mindset have the potential to excel at higher levels because they are more comfortable taking risks, have perseverance and positive associations with accepting feedback and challenging themselves.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

One of Hardy’s assets is its strong family, neighborhood, and community connections. Many families walk their children to school, creating a tight-knit bond. Students who have graduated to Middle and High School often come back to visit Hardy and more than a few have selected to do a senior project in Hardy classrooms. Teachers develop connections with families through Kindergarten orientation, late summer meet and greets, classroom tours, Back to School Nights, conferences, and good-news parent phone calls. Monthly Coffee and Conversation with the principal enables parents to feel connected to the school. The PTO committee welcomes new families to Hardy and matches them to someone who can answer questions and be a personal support. Hardy students are actively engaged in their community, as well; we value service projects such as providing holiday caroling for seniors and persons with Alzheimer’s disease and collecting pajamas for children at nearby homeless shelters.

Parents are deeply involved at Hardy and are invited into classrooms as guest readers, volunteering for Day of Play, and taking students on engaging nature walks around our playground. Parents share their cultural backgrounds through class presentations, shaping students' understanding of the diverse world around them. The principal provides weekly messages to parents keeping families connected to the larger Hardy community. Our active PTO supports educational programs through school assemblies, enrichment programs and field trips. The School Council, with its teachers, parents, and community representation, collaborates to build bonds to support Hardy's educational goals. Currently the school council is working to diversify our book collection in the library and classrooms and make visible the ways we celebrate identity.

To share learning with families, Hardy teachers host an annual night for students to teach their families favorite math games. To promote STEM, Parents host a science night where students don lab coats and goggles before doing hands-on experiments led by parents with expertise in science and tech fields. This year, due to COVID-19, we have started a Helping Hands group in which the community rallies together to support Hardy families in need. Hardy has an active mentoring program to support our students from Boston, who travel to Hardy to learn. Each student is assigned a teacher to mentor them for each year they are at Hardy. The consistency of having one trusted adult to support through the six years at Hardy creates a strong connection for both the staff member and the student. Wellesley's Host Families Program also connects students from Boston with a Wellesley family. Located near Wellesley College, Hardy is fortunate to have college students participate in our classrooms for two hours each week as part of their education courses.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Professional culture at Hardy School has deep roots in strong leadership over many years and reveals a true commitment to life-long learning. Hardy educators ask the same of each other as we do of our students; we interact with respectful, encouraging and inclusive action. This generates a sense that we are truly a community of learners - students and adults - who enjoy spending our days together. Staff feel valued, supported and safely pushed to embrace the many challenges that are a part of educating students in the 21st century.

For over 20 years, we have started our faculty meetings with Celebrations and Recognitions, both personal and professional; in recent years we added time for a brief Professional Practice Share. At Hardy, we know the value of having a peer acknowledge, "I see you and the good work you're doing" and of the power of collaborative, not competitive, culture. Faculty meetings serve as a place for structured, in-depth professional development, facilitated by teachers, coaches, specialists or the principal. Recent topics include: Common Core math practices, culturally responsive teaching as defined in Zaretta Hammond's book *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, de-escalation strategies, tools from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) core SEL competencies and essential design elements of PBL gold standard projects.

Instructional coaching is another essential part of our investment in teachers. It is the mission of our school-based literacy and math coaches to meet the needs of all learners through prevention over intervention and by building the capacity of all Hardy educators. Our model revolves around Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) cycles for grade level teams, including special educators, EL teachers and support staff. Student centered coaching and Data Wise protocols help us use evidence based analysis of student work to drive our investigation into teaching practice. Recent CCL cycles include: math-talks focused on constructing logical arguments in grade 1, literary essay writing and student-led small groups in grade 3 and an exploration of social issue change makers in grade 5 using Sara Ahmed's book *Being the Change*.

Other examples of Hardy's professional development structures include: Wellesley's mentoring program for all new teachers, Hardy faculty book clubs, job-embedded professional development through visits to designated lab classrooms and participation in seminars and coursework at area Professional Learning Networks and Universities.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy of Hardy School is rooted in the idea that all educators have the potential to be leaders in support of our school's strategic goals. While the principal establishes the vision for Hardy, it is a venture created in collaboration with teachers and other administrators. This vision is articulated in the School Improvement Plan which provides strategic goals and measurable action to direct the work of Hardy School. These strategic goals are rooted in the belief that every student can be successful and in a commitment to innovation which promotes student success.

Hardy's commitment to teacher leadership is demonstrated in ways both formal and informal. Teachers serve on numerous committees alongside the principal which bind and drive the school. Teachers make time for grant writing each year to the town's education foundation and outside organizations; these grant awards help to secure funding for educational innovation and enrichment initiatives. Teachers keep the door open for visits from colleagues at Hardy, within Wellesley and from neighboring towns; we believe that leadership begins with transparency and willingness to share best practices.

There is no shortage of opportunity to serve on a committee at Hardy. The Leadership Team, comprised of one classroom teacher per grade level, a special education teacher and coach/specialist, meets monthly and is tasked with improving teaching and learning practices and the culture of the school at large. The Special Education Team is comprised of the special education department head, special education team chair, special education teachers, and related service providers. The team meets bi-monthly to analyze, problem solve and share professional expertise with the goal of improving SPED practices through collaboration. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee is comprised of teachers who meet monthly with an equity lens to examine teaching practices and to further our goals around culturally responsive pedagogy. The Social-Emotional Learning Committee, comprised of the school psychologist, general education teachers, and special education teachers, meets monthly to examine instructional practices and systems designed to meet the SEL needs of all students and those with social emotional skill deficits. The School Council is comprised of teacher representatives, parent representatives, and a community member. In monthly meetings, the Council supports the development of the School Improvement Plan, reviews the annual budget and plans initiatives designed to promote positive school culture. Hardy benefits from an active Parent Teacher Organization that provides enrichment opportunities and community building activities for the students and the school community at large.

Keeping the school safe and functioning during COVID-19 was an enormous task and the administration relied heavily on teacher leaders. Prior to the return of in-person learning, the Principal established focus groups to create plans for arrival and dismissal, recess and lunch, and hallway and bathroom procedures. These focus groups studied the health and safety guidelines provided by the CDC and Wellesley Board of Health and then aligned Hardy's operational plans to match these complex and rapidly shifting parameters. Throughout the year, the Leadership Team has provided ongoing feedback and necessary revisions to ensure optimal safety conditions remain in place. As a result, Hardy has been able to maintain a healthy and safe environment.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

"Hate has no home here," translated into different languages, prominently displayed in a Hardy classroom is the heart of our school. Images that include different languages, races, genders, families, cultures, traditions, religions, and abilities are displayed throughout Hardy. We are a school that is committed to creating a culturally sensitive and responsive environment that values, honors, and recognizes the diverse backgrounds and needs of our students, staff and community. At Hardy it is our lifework to hold high expectations for all students, cultivate cooperative and caring relationships, respect differences, and reshape our curriculum so that it is culturally relevant.

In our current social climate, it is crucial that staff are prepared to address the major events happening in our world. During times of crisis and upheaval, our School Psychologist reaches out to family and staff with resources to support the social emotional needs of our children. Last

spring, many teachers reached out to families and held Open Circles about racial injustice. Most recently, conversation and planning for display of a Black Lives Matter flag allow us to express our values around equality, respect, fairness and human decency.

As a part of our continued efforts to connect in 2020-2021, our school saw the need for something new: a Hardy Cares Program. Staff notice and act when a family needs assistance with various necessities (food, boots, and gloves) and organize the purchase of these items. Trusted relationships with staff are a vital component in the lives of our students. Our newly established Connection Counts initiative is yet another example of Hardy's ever evolving programming in service and support of all.

Hardy educators know the power belonging and want students to see themselves reflected in our environment. Teachers and librarians facilitate lessons to integrate books with themes of DE&I as well GI&E; these lead to powerful student thinking and act as a springboard for pivotal discussions. In recent years, our PTO funded guided reading texts showing BIPOC children and families in everyday situations to better represent groups that have been underrepresented in the past. Our crucial next step is evaluating our classroom libraries and curriculum with the 7 Forms of Bias Tool to ensure unbiased representation of all.

Staff at Hardy continue to deepen their training in DE&I by enrolling in two online courses through the Equity Learning Institute, entitled Understanding Equity & Inequity and Learning to be a Threat to Inequity facilitated by the founder of the institute, Dr. Paul Gorski. We are committed to understanding how DE&I issues impact each student's experience at school and pledge to educate ourselves to do better, to be better.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

While many factors contributed to our school's continued ability to successfully educate and support students since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the one practice most helpful is our robust school-wide competency framework. Prior to the school closure, the school-wide competency framework of R.I.S.E. (Respect others, Include all, Show safe behavior, and Encourage all to participate and solve problems) was well-established within the fabric of our school community. At monthly assemblies, in classrooms, hallways, and playgrounds, R.I.S.E. was promoted to facilitate a positive school culture.

When school closure first took place, the school leadership team found ways to utilize this school-wide competency framework; while students weren't physically in a building or schoolyard, the R.I.S.E. framework continued to be emphasized within the virtual space. As part of the remote school day, the principal provided a daily pre-recorded video announcement and reminders about R.I.S.E.; these were watched as part of each classroom's morning meeting. Students learned to use R.I.S.E. in the virtual learning space as they did when physically on the grounds of Hardy School. Students employed R.I.S.E. when participating in lessons, in video-streaming breakout rooms and in internet safety. They learned that regardless of the learning space, the pro-social values at Hardy could sustain our community of learners.

Over time, as the school pivoted to in-person learning as part of a hybrid model, the school leadership team once again considered ways to use this school-wide competency framework to support a positive school culture. The R. in R.I.S.E. became the foundation for promoting acceptance of different mask choices. The I for Include was reinforced by teaching students safe greetings and non-verbal signals that would make others feel welcomed and supported, even with social distancing in place. Teachers taught about the S. for Safe behavior when promoting proper mask wearing and appropriate hand washing. Teachers used this competency framework as a foundation for promoting E, the encouragement of all to participate in our new safety guidelines and new ways of learning. To this day, students feel proud to show R.I.S.E. when they follow social distancing, hand washing and mask wearing; they remind others to do the same in kind and respectful ways. Having a robust school-wide competency framework such as R.I.S.E. has helped to ensure student health, safety and an overall positive school culture.