

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

Official School Name Hilltop Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 24524 Hilltop Drive
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Beachwood State OH Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 44122-1344

County Ohio (OH)

Telephone (216) 831-7144 Fax _____

Web site/URL https://www.beachwoodschoools.org/ E-mail smiller@beachwoodschoools.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. Robert Hardis E-mail rph@beachwoodschoools.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Beachwood City School District Tel. (216) 831-7144

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 Dr. Brian Weiss
(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):
- 2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 4 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	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	50	45	95
4	34	43	77
5	59	42	101
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	143	130	273

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 1.1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 21.6 % Asian
 - 18 % Black or African American
 - 3.6 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 46.8 % White
 - 8.9 % 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: 11%

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	10
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	23
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	33
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	299
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.11
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	11

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

Arabic, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, Korean, Turkish, Chinese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 4 %
12 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 12 %

Total number students who qualify: 32

8. Students receiving special education services: 15 %
40 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>5</u> Autism | <u>3</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>6</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>17</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>5</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>2</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: 3
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	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	19
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	11
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 15:1

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%	96%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 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. 2015

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

To develop intellectual entrepreneurs with a social conscience.

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.

The 2020-2021 school year began with Hilltop students learning in a remote setting, with the exception of those in need of the most specialized instruction. During the remote learning period, students whose individualized learning plans required direct instruction were provided personalized schedules ranging from in person learning for related services or attending for a full learning day. After 3 weeks, all families were offered the opportunity to select a remote option or a return to in-person learning, and approximately 85% of our students returned. There is one classroom at each grade level designated as a virtual classroom for students whose families have chosen to remain online. To ensure the safety of our students, we created small class sizes of fewer than 16 students to maintain a minimum of 6 feet of social distance. Hilltop uses a content area specific, departmentalized instructional model. This year, teachers moved to each of the classrooms rather than the students. In addition, all students eat lunch in their "bubble group" rather than going into the cafeteria as an entire grade level. On November 30, 2020, we shifted back to remote learning for three weeks and returned to in-person learning on January 4, 2021. Since then, we have had a steady return of students to in-person learning as our staff has become vaccinated and our in-person learning has proven safe and effective.

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

Welcome to Hilltop Elementary School! At Hilltop, our physical space reflects our core values and beliefs. This year, our theme is “Every journey has a story; seek first to understand and then to be understood.” In the spirit of this theme, our walls are filled with student centered displays celebrating school spirit, pride, and academic accomplishments. Students are empowered to take ownership and initiative with their academic, social and emotional experiences as a part of our curriculum through goal setting.

Hilltop serves students in grades 3-5. The Beachwood community values education as a priority demonstrated by its support and partnership with the schools. There is a strong connection between the City of Beachwood and the school district, including the Recreation Department that supports many extracurricular opportunities for our elementary students. Hilltop also has an active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) which strengthens our home-school partnership. The PTO provides classroom supports, funds programming grants, and spearheads community-wide events.

Hilltop was built in 1957 with additional learning spaces added through the years to serve students ranging from kindergarten through 6th grade. In 2007, Hilltop transitioned to serving students in grades 3-5. Due to its prime location near premier medical facilities, universities, and world class cultural institutions, Beachwood Schools attracts professional families. Furthermore, families come to Hilltop because of our reputation for excellence in meeting the needs of all students with a focus on the individual. Within the last fifteen years, Beachwood has proudly become a place of diverse cultures, languages, religions and family structures. Our diverse population provides an opportunity for a global education within the walls of Hilltop. We serve our diverse population through English Language, Gifted and Special Needs services, as well as affinity groups and a host of curricular and extracurricular clubs and activities.

Success is also fostered through our Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) motto of “The Three Rs”: Respectful, Responsible, and Resilient Learners. This theme is inherent to the district's focus areas of student achievement, intercultural awareness and mental health. Students and staff exemplify these expectations through daily actions, thus creating a school culture that respects the personal learning and individuality of each student. Students are recognized and celebrated weekly by staff for demonstrating “The Three Rs”.

Hilltop’s classes are organized into approximately 70-80 minute blocks to facilitate best practices for core subjects. Students are scheduled with intentionality into classes to create the most dynamic learning environment for each individual. Content area experts teach core subjects providing students with more in-depth instruction. Twenty-first century learning comes to life in every classroom through the integration of technology including a 1:1 Chromebook model, the use of document cameras, interactive clickers, smart boards, iPads and other digital manipulatives.

In addition to the core curriculum, students have a comprehensive unified arts schedule of Physical Education, General Music, Instrumental Music, Art, Guidance, and Media/Technology. These additional programs provide students an opportunity to engage with the arts and access their talents.

Hilltop embraces the inclusionary model for students with disabilities. Most students with disabilities are integrated into regular education classrooms with support as necessary. Our teaching approach includes specially designed instruction in the areas of reading, math, and behavioral needs. Instruction is offered within a continuum of educational settings ranging from a resource classroom for students with cognitive disabilities, to a full inclusionary model using co-teach strategies in general education based on the individual needs of students.

Students receive a comprehensive character education program through Guidance classes. Educating the whole child extends beyond the school day at Hilltop with a broad offering of extracurricular activities. A large percentage of our students participate in intramural sports, Student Council, Choir, Greenhouse Club, Chess Club, academic tutoring, Study Club, Yearbook, Destination Imagination, and MAC Scholars. Some of these programs have been paused due to COVID-19 and will resume in the 2021-2022 school year.

While addressing the challenges of the pandemic, we have remained committed to embracing all of our students, including those learning online. Students engage together in the morning announcements, led by our student leaders. We utilize daily classroom community-building circles to enhance relationships between students and staff. We showcase our diverse community through recognition months: Black History, Mental Health, Women's History, Arab American Heritage and Asian American Heritage so far this year. These recognition months include hands-on learning activities to promote pride, curiosity and respect for one another.

Following the 2015 Blue Ribbon recognition, the Hilltop community was motivated to stretch further to meet the growing changes in our world. Our commitment is to provide students with more meaningful curriculum including social emotional learning opportunities. The district and school embraced more professional development in the areas of intercultural awareness and mental health. Our goal is to educate the whole child by providing excellence in the integration of an outstanding curriculum within all academic content areas. Our curriculum includes social emotional learning with the implementation of a consistent weekly Guidance curriculum and materials highlighting and representing our diverse learning community.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

The pandemic has challenged Hilltop to adapt its curriculum, instruction, and assessment to better meet the current operating schedule. A benefit to instructional design as a result of COVID-19 has been that all teachers and students fully embrace technology integration.

This year, teachers in grades 3-5 have transitioned their direct instruction and mini lessons to Google Slides. We provide live streaming options for students who are sick or quarantined to continue educational access. The learning standards begin with identifying the purpose of the learning. Every lesson begins with an “I Can” statement that uses real world experiences to activate thinking. Teachers instruct one or two content areas maximum, allowing the students to receive instruction from content area specialists. This approach allows our 3-5 grade band to engage in collegial vertical collaboration, design and review common assessments, and illuminate a clear scope and sequence for teaching and learning.

Teachers use backwards design to analyze assessment data and meaningfully plan differentiated instruction to maximize student achievement by using various groupings, re-teaching, guided practice, independent review, and enriched learning opportunities. Lessons include formative assessment to plan future learning. Teachers use multiple assessments including individualized vendor created math and reading assessments, teacher created, curriculum based, and other formative assessments including Edulastic, Quizlet, Kahoot, and Pear Deck. We utilize a variety of progress monitoring tools to support enrichment and intervention including IXL, RAZ Kids, Vocabulary A-Z, MindPlay, ALEKS, Sonday, Edmark, and Social Thinking.

The gifted intervention specialist (GIS) collaborates with subject area teachers to plan meaningful extensions for gifted learners. Students found eligible in the areas of creative thinking and cognition are provided differentiation through all subjects. Gifted instruction uses problem based learning and tiered strategies. The gifted students also have a customized Written Education Plan or a Written Acceleration Plan.

In mathematics, students are identified for acceleration at the end of 3rd grade with additional opportunities to "jump in" at the end of their 4th and 5th grade years. Participation in the accelerated class is determined by placement tests, teacher recommendations, and state and national assessments. Equitable access to this accelerated pathway has been a focus of district and building administrators and teachers. In 4th grade, the curriculum is compressed to include both 4th and 5th grade state standards. In 5th grade, students complete the 6th grade curriculum. Using this model for the past decade at Hilltop has served as a pipeline whereby nearly 60% of Beachwood Middle School students are accelerated in mathematics, completing Algebra and Geometry before entering high school.

Our mathematics curriculum is focused on teaching number sense and problem solving skills. Developmentally appropriate strategies such as spiraling curriculum, center based learning, hands-on instruction, and collaborative problem solving solidify the mastery of foundational skills in the core curriculum. Using mathematical practice standards, teachers create collaborative learning opportunities for students to apply when solving complex problems.

Our language arts curriculum integrates research-based approaches for teaching reading and writing and is rich with a diverse literature collection and high expectations for developing voracious readers. With a focus on balanced literacy, our curriculum emphasizes standards-based instruction rooted in guided reading, writer’s workshop and developmental spelling. The language arts curriculum is taught through whole and small group settings.

The science curriculum is integrated and inquiry-based. In each grade level, students study earth science, life science, and physical science. This curriculum is enhanced with resources including a variety of texts, videos, and simulations. The focus of the curriculum is to create hands-on experiences for students to explore the scientific method.

The social studies curriculum strands include history, geography, government and economics. The units of study are taught in the classroom utilizing a variety of resources, classroom projects and presentations. Students have the opportunity to engage with our city officials to bring learning about government to life. An example of this includes our 3rd grade students prompting a financial partnership between our school district and city council. This resulted in an ordinance to have seat belts placed on all school buses in Beachwood, paid for by the City of Beachwood.

Students read and write on a daily basis across content areas. The reading of nonfiction text and literature is integrated into all subjects. Students read scientific articles, historical primary and secondary resources, and mathematical graphics to reinforce their understanding of content. Students are also engaged in creating detailed written responses that illustrate their understanding and connection to curriculum through journals, problems of the day, lab observations, and historical accounts.

The curriculum at Hilltop is supported with library/media and technology resources. The media center provides supplemental resources such as books, magazines, periodicals and online digital databases for students and staff. Each classroom has access to technology that enhances the curriculum. Interactive white boards provide online simulations that actively engage students. 1:1 Chromebooks allow for online research, writing and independent skill reinforcement. Subscriptions to online practice tutorials such as Newsela and IXL, afford students the opportunity to explore at appropriate individualized levels. The technology enables teachers to monitor student mastery of the curriculum and participate in digital assessments.

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:

All unified arts courses follow the national and state standards. Students participate in unified arts for 40 minutes each day. The students rotate on a weekly basis through General/Vocal Music, Physical Education, Art, Media/Technology, and Guidance.

General Music

Hilltop students experience music through technology, movement, and hands-on approaches. Students enjoy singing, dancing, playing the recorder, and a variety of instruments as they develop music appreciation and music literacy. An end of the year performance culminates the activities of the general/vocal music program.

Library and Technology

Hilltop houses a library with approximately 10,000 print materials for students and staff to access as well as rich digital resources such as ebooks, databases, and subscriptions that enhance literacy within the school community. A school librarian teaches weekly media classes that support the curriculum by integrating content standards with literacy and technology skills. Special attention is given to the research process across all grade levels, both within the weekly classes and through collaboration with classroom teachers. Students visit the library and technology lab to borrow books, to practice presentation and design skills, as well as computer programming. Enrichment activities include author visits, celebrations of reading, such as Right to Read Week, and a vendor book fair.

Visual Art

Each visual art class lesson is based on the Ohio Fine Arts standards and utilizes differentiated approaches. Projects are based on specific artists, different mediums and techniques, and the study of art history. Instruction emphasizes high levels of independent learning and creativity. Upon the completion of projects, students reflect, share, analyze, and write about their work. Classes are enriched with individualized instructional options. Students' artistic creations are featured throughout Hilltop and within the surrounding community.

Physical Education

The physical education program contributes to the social, emotional, mental and physical well-being of the child through highly engaging experiences. The development of motor, leadership, and fair play skills are emphasized as students engage in individual, cooperative and competitive situations. Students engage in the President's Challenge Fitness Test. Hilltop boasts a full sized school gym and grounds that enhance the learning space for students. Students proceed through a logical progression of skills through developmentally appropriate activities. Students have access to adaptive physical education as a part of Hilltop's special education programming. At the end of the school year, our students participate with community stakeholders in a field day as a culminating activity.

Guidance/Social Emotional Learning

The guidance/social emotional learning program focuses on social, mental health and general wellness topics. These include social and friendship skills, problem solving, character development, executive functioning, adolescent growth, mindfulness and coping strategies. The school counselor teaches this course and sends out surveys in collaboration with the general education teachers to gain a deeper understanding of topics that need to be further addressed.

3. Academic Supports:

Hilltop met all targets and earned an "A" for gap closing on 2019 state testing. When compared to the state average, we performed well and met all measures. To support gap closing and acceleration, the student body is assessed to identify needs. Through Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and the Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) process, achievement is evaluated on a continuous, individual basis. Supports are also provided through Response to Intervention (RTI), Title I intervention services, and after school tutoring programs.

Hilltop embraces the inclusionary model for special education students. Teachers receive co-teaching professional development, strengthening the model within the general education setting. Services include an intervention specialist and educational assistant at each grade level. Functional, academic and social skills are supported based on the needs of students. Our district invests in resources that allow for targeted intervention and assessment. The school schedule includes specific time for interventions that address the students' IEP goals. A resource classroom for students with severe cognitive disabilities is available and mainstreaming occurs in unified arts, science and social studies when appropriate.

English language learners (ELL) are assessed using the Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment and Screener and are provided with individualized accommodations and modifications. The ELL teacher collaborates with the regular education teachers and provides supplemental materials to assist students in accessing the general education curriculum. There is no achievement gap in the performance index for this subgroup.

Students are identified as gifted in the following categories: math, ELA, superior cognitive ability, and creative thinking. In 2018, Hilltop began using the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking and the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test to identify students with superior cognitive abilities; these tests have identified more twice-exceptional, English Language Learners, and African American

students as gifted.

The Gifted Intervention Specialist (GIS) collaborates with subject area teachers to help plan appropriate extensions for their gifted learners. In 3rd grade, the GIS meets with gifted learners during their math and reading blocks. In 4th and 5th grade, the GIS provides instruction in science for students identified with superior cognitive abilities.

Students are identified for math acceleration at the end of 3rd grade. Placement in the advanced class is determined by placement tests, teacher recommendations, and state and national assessments. In 4th grade, the curriculum is compressed to include both 4th and 5th grade state standards. In 5th grade, the students complete the 6th grade curriculum.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Involving students in an educational community that engages the whole child is the foundation of Hilltop. We value safety, relationships, and involvement. Each day begins with homeroom in order to foster connections. Weekly community circle meetings serve as an opportunity to strengthen classroom bonds. In addition, teachers and our guidance counselor collect a daily wellness survey that captures students' feelings and emotions, targeting attention to those who need it most.

Students taking an active role in their academic progress is vital to successful achievement and engagement. Teachers work with students to create visible representation of their progress. By teaching students to be accountable for individualized goal setting and action plans for success, we empower them to build upon their strengths.

The weekly star student brings in pictures, artifacts and stories that are meaningful to their identity. Diversity is celebrated by discussing and honoring students' cultural heritage including the Artifact Project which highlights significant family heirlooms.

Our Positive Behavior and Intervention Support (PBIS) program embraces positive behaviors. Students are motivated through the use of Bison Bucks; they receive Bison Bucks for being respectful, responsible and resilient and are entered into a lunch raffle at each grade level as a reward. This year, online learners use Class Dojo points to replace Bison Bucks within our reward system.

Extracurricular activities engage students in the school community. These include: Yearbook, Greenhouse Club, Intramural Sports, Choir, Art, Bison News Network, Read-Write-Run Book Club, Chess, Destination Imagination and Outward Boundless. This year, extracurricular clubs were limited to those that could be held virtually, therefore, Student Council and our Minority Achievement Committee (MAC) Scholars continued to support student involvement and community outreach.

Technology plays an integral role in engagement across all subjects. Hilltop staff utilize Google Classroom, Kahoot, Quizlet, Nearpod, Google Slides, Pear Deck, Khan Academy, RAZ Kids, Epic, and Mystery Science. Digital manipulatives and resources allow students to benefit from hands-on and project-based learning. Likewise, virtual demonstrations, simulations and experiments encourage students to learn by doing. Various multimedia projects and school wide events include spirit weeks, One School-One Book, and Right to Read Week fostering student planning and motivation.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Hilltop believes that families working in cooperation with the schools brings success. Since COVID-19, we have found creative ways to ensure we maintain this practice and engage proactively with families. This year we hosted individual virtual meetings with each homeroom student and their family to establish connections and gain insight about their children and family values. We provided a virtual parent information night to discuss the academic expectations and changes in our virtual learning. We sent a parent questionnaire inviting parents to share their insights, suggestions, and concerns. Additionally, Hilltop hosted two virtual parent-teacher conference nights. Teachers called every parent at the beginning of the year to invite collaboration. Communication continues throughout the year with frequent positive calls, emails, and notes home to celebrate students' successes. Newsletters sent weekly from the principals and classroom teachers keep parents informed of upcoming events and the curriculum. Parents and guardians have continuous access to student academic progress through our online grade book. We want families to be informed partners in their child's education.

Extending the educational experience beyond the walls of the school is another highly valued mission at Hilltop. Various committees and organizations work collaboratively to ensure students and staff learn from the diverse experiences within our community. Equity & Engagement Teams consisting of parents,

educators, and students have ensured all cultures are represented and celebrated at Hilltop. Students and staff decorated their doors in honor of Black History Month. In addition, we celebrated Women's History Month and Arab American Heritage Month to spread appreciation for our community and contributions made to society by these populations. Other cultural celebrations recognizing Kwanzaa, Lunar New Year, Diwali, Christmas and Hanukkah served to bring awareness and commonality to our learning community bringing “light” during the winter months. The community and Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) partner together to work with educators to fund classroom programming and provide needed supplies for various projects. The PTO provided a grant for the school to participate in a One School-One Book program. They also purchased a book for each family in grades K-5 to participate and promote literacy at home and school.

Hilltop emphasizes the importance of empathy and social consciousness. Students, families, and staff have donated supplies to the armed forces, shelters, food banks, and MedWish International. We reached out to local nursing homes and made Valentines to display for the residents who have been impacted by isolation due to the pandemic.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Hilltop’s professional culture promotes diversity, collaboration, wellness, and continuous learning for staff. Hilltop fosters an environment where teachers feel valued and supported. Our teachers are encouraged to collaborate in professional learning communities and communicate regarding students’ needs as well as share instructional strategies. This collaboration time, built into the school schedule, gives teachers an opportunity to build trusting relationships and rapport with their colleagues. Book studies create meaningful discussions among staff members. Groups meet in socially distanced circles giving staff the opportunity to share ideas. The Sunshine Committee has celebrated special milestones in the lives of staff members. Celebrating new babies, unions, retirements, and staff promotions have proven to be a bright spot during these stressful times.

Professional development sessions have been centered around the topics of co-teaching, intercultural awareness, trauma and mental health as it relates to overall achievement and development. Technology training for staff has proven to be an integral part of preparing teachers for distance learning. Collaboration and sharing of resources allows teachers to innovate and redesign teaching and learning for all students.

Mental health has been a primary focus for students and staff. The district has provided a confidential program through One America, helping staff and their families with everyday challenges. Our school has embraced a wellness challenge announced daily by students and shared online. As a part of our wellness awareness month, we introduced a “Stop Everything and Breathe” and “Stop Everything and Dance” moment in our day. Professional learning has included a speaker from Relevant Connections, who presented on characteristics and effects of trauma and its relevance in school. This has proven to be invaluable to the staff as we navigate the global pandemic.

Communication is an important part of maintaining a positive culture in our school. Each evening, our building principals communicate pertinent information that is integral to the following day. Communication enables staff participation in upcoming building-wide events. The weekly elementary newsletter distributed via email from our building principals keeps all stakeholders informed. Families enjoy reading stories and seeing pictures of students participating; remote learners are also featured in the newsletter. These newsletters highlight important events, student and staff accomplishments, as well as memorable moments.

4. School Leadership:

Hilltop Elementary embraces a shared leadership style that promotes building capacity in all stakeholders. The leadership team is involved in all aspects of school life, interacts with students throughout the day and are visible at events during and after school. This collaborative approach forges positive relationships at Hilltop Elementary School.

With feedback from grade level teams, individuals, team leaders and the districts’ curriculum council, the school leadership team sets building goals and targets for professional development each school year. The

curriculum council uses data to establish goals for professional development each year. Professional development for the last several school years focused on the areas of mental health, student achievement, and intercultural awareness.

Shared leadership takes the shape of grade level team leaders facilitating ongoing meetings. These meetings focus on the development and implementation of data-driven instructional strategies and Multi Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). Our special education team at Hilltop collaborates with our general education staff members to design and implement various instructional strategies and interventions that support academic, social emotional and behavioral progress.

Grade level teams and content area teams each meet a minimum of once a week. By having teachers departmentalized, they have become experts in teaching their content. Meetings center on lesson planning, student work samples, and development and review of common assessments.

All staff members focus on relationship building and rewarding students through the PBIS initiative focused on the three “R’s”, Respect, Responsibility and Resiliency. Whether you are a teacher, psychologist, custodian, or bus driver, staff reward students for positive decision making.

This shared leadership style is not only demonstrated by the staff but by the students as well. The Student Council and MAC Scholars frequently coordinate events that promote a positive school culture. Recently, the Student Council led a daily mental health initiative and created an affirmation bulletin board with each student sharing positive self images of themselves. The MAC Scholars program promotes confidence, social and cultural connection and academic skills among African American students to help address inequity. The group is active throughout the year planning a variety of events including Black History Month activities.

Our staff has adopted a growth mindset, are collaborative and desire to improve our practices. We are committed to each student achieving their potential while building capacity in ourselves and others.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Going into the 2020-2021 school year, we remained committed to establishing strong connections within our classrooms. We dedicated the first three weeks of school to community-building circles which built connection among students and staff and celebrated our similarities and differences. Throughout the year, time spent in these circles has created a safe space for students to respond to targeted prompts and provided us an opportunity to address larger scale social issues. Additionally, community building circles led to the creation of respect agreements, giving students and staff an opportunity to share what they each need to be respected and heard. These relationship building exercises are the foundation on which we have built our culturally responsive teaching and learning practices.

One way we engage students in culturally responsive teaching and learning is by including daily check ins with classes. For example, in 5th grade, our daily themes include, “Motivational Monday,” “Tunes Tuesday,” “Woohoo Wednesday,” “Thankful Thursday,” and “Fun Friday.” Through these themed days we engage in conversations to learn about each other, our families, and the things that we value. In our homerooms and in our social-emotional guidance class, we teach Zones of Regulation providing students the words and opportunity to express how they are feeling.

Our district’s Director of Equity & Community Engagement has established three separate Equity & Engagement Teams (parents, teachers and students) at Hilltop. These teams discuss complex social issues in our global and local school community. Hilltop's ELA teachers have worked with our curriculum office to audit the texts used to teach literacy to allow students to see themselves, others, and the world in the literature they read.

Restorative practices are an important part of our culture. Our staff has a focus on utilizing positive behavior interventions and supports and embracing practices that restore relationships. Restorative practices further promote social justice and ensure discipline is approached from an individualized and culturally responsive perspective.

The Hilltop Elementary staff has participated in professional development with Dr. Jennifer Eberhardt (renowned researcher on implicit bias) and the Anti-Defamation League on bias awareness. At the beginning of the year, all staff participated in workshops surrounding racism and inclusion provided by Point Made Learning. Most recently, staff members learned from Relevant Connections about historical trauma and how it impacts school stakeholders.

Our Hilltop family values all persons connecting to educational dialogue by embracing diverse perspectives in our instruction and curriculum. Providing an inclusive educational setting and experience for stakeholders is paramount to embracing equity, engagement, and respect in our learning community.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Most instrumental to Hilltop's continued ability to educate and support students since the school closure in March 2020 is our commitment to develop the whole child. Students at Hilltop have an academic schedule tailored to their individual interests and needs including small group intervention and enrichment in academic areas. Students are attended to uniquely, not with a one size fits all approach. Support services include, but are not limited to, homework club, tutoring, language learning intervention class, executive functioning support and reading/math intervention.

Hilltop students are active in extracurricular activities after school. The wide variety of offerings and our focus on relationships contribute to the development of the whole child focus at Hilltop.

Our teachers are always looking for creative ways to innovate instructional opportunities for our students. During the pandemic, our teachers made a paradigm shift to mostly technology-based learning with the integration of hands-on materials to support holistic learning. This has further prepared them for both in-person and online learning in the future.

Staff at Hilltop are committed to growing their effectiveness in instruction, social emotional development, mental health and intercultural awareness. Staff have reimagined teaching and learning by instructing the content standards in creative ways, coupled with instruction in social emotional learning opportunities. Teachers consider the diversity of our students and use this inter-cultural awareness with best practice strategies to engage children in the learning process.

During COVID, our staff has continued to build an inclusive curriculum. We participated in a year long English Language Arts review to analyze our classroom texts used to teach literacy. This literacy analysis will result in the intentional selection of more diverse literature that supports our curriculum. We have also participated in meaningful professional development with trauma specialists and mental health personnel from the community.

Our passion for education has deepened our commitment to be stronger facilitators of knowledge. Our shared goal of being life-long learners who seek to understand others' perspectives has pushed us to engage in practices that allow us to meet each child's individual and diverse needs. As we grow and evolve as a staff of educators, we are confident that our ongoing learning will result in the continued achievement of each and every student at Hilltop Elementary School.