

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 130 Scott Road  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Cumberland State RI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 02864-2812

County Providence County

Telephone (401) 333-0554 Fax (401) 334-1811

Web site/URL https://cumberlandschools.org/ E-mail nidia.karbonik@cumberlandschools.org

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\* Mr. Philip Thornton Ed.D E-mail phil.thornton@cumberlandschools.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Cumberland School District Tel. (401) 658-1600

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mrs. Karen Freedman  
(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**

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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

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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):
- 5 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 8 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	25	14	39
1	31	18	49
2	15	32	47
3	39	24	63
4	14	17	31
5	23	23	46
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	147	128	275

\*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):
- 0.5 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 14.9 % Asian
  - 3.2 % Black or African American
  - 0 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 74.5 % White
  - 6.9 % 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: 12%

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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	14
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	20
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	34
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	289
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.12
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	12

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Kannada, Chinese, Tamil, Turkish, Malayalam, Telegu, Hindi, Portuguese and Spanish.

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 7 %  
19 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 15 %  
 Total number students who qualify: 41

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %  
27 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>2</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>4</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>8</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>11</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 19
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.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	13
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	2
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 23:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	95%	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.

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

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

Yes  No

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

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

Ashton School is a diverse family of learners in which a partnership between the school, families, and community collaborate to develop responsible, ethical, productive, and adaptable citizens. We believe in promoting high expectations and high standards of learning and behavior for all students within a safe, supportive, and challenging environment.

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.

During the 2020-2021 school year, Ashton students were offered and engaged in various models of learning through the school year. Parents were provided the choice of selecting the model that best fit the needs of their child and family. Each grade level was offered either distance learning (hereon synonymous with virtual learning) or the in-person hybrid model. In the hybrid (partial in-person) model, students attended school for two days a week, alternating between students in groups A and B to decrease class size and meet the CDC distancing guidelines. Students learned from home on the other three days of the week. Those three online days consisted of one “virtual day” for all students (both hybrid and online students) and then two days of asynchronously assigned work. The distance learning students received live, direct instruction every school day by a designated distance learning teacher. In terms of the model’s application to the school staff, half of the staff was assigned to teach in person while the other half taught virtually. Finally - per Rhode Island state laws - families also had the choice of homeschooling their children. This meant that families had to independently follow all applicable Rhode Island laws for homeschooled students.

35% of families elected the distance learning model for their students, while 65% families elected to use the in-person hybrid model. The discussed distance and hybrid models were offered until March of 2021, with the exception of two weeks during the month of January when all students engaged in distance learning following the holiday break.

On March 2nd of 2021, all students (distance and hybrid) were offered the opportunity to attend school in-person for four days a week. However, to ensure comfort/safety, students could still choose to remain in or switch to fully distance learning. Currently, 72% of students attend school in-person for four days a week, while the remaining 28% of students attend virtually five days a week. One day a week (Monday) continues to be virtual for all students. The school continues to be flexible in accommodating parents' requests to switch students from one model to the other, as long as enrollment numbers allow it. Grade levels with high in-person enrollment are simultaneously live streaming the in-person instruction to the distance learning students in that grade. In addition, the hybrid classrooms have been provided with the assistance of an extra staff member. The use of simultaneous live streaming and extra staffing has allowed the school to accept more in-person students while still complying with CDC guidelines.

Students in need of special education and/or language services (i.e., learning English as a second language) were offered in-person, walk-in services throughout the entire school year.

Snow days are now all virtual, so students no longer miss instruction during inclement weather or emergency school closings.

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**

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Ashton Elementary School is located on a wooded lot near the center of town in Cumberland, Rhode Island. The twenty classroom building was constructed in three phases: one in 1959, 1963 and most recently in 2008. The student population over recent years has fluctuated between approximately 270 to 300 students, grades kindergarten through five. We celebrate and embrace diversity, which presents us with an opportunity to learn from each other and appreciate different cultures, abilities, and backgrounds. Much of our English Language Learner population is from India. They are often here short-term, resulting in the frequent relocation of families and a high mobility rate (12%), which presents a challenge when creating stability and consistency for students.

The general unwritten philosophy of our school is to work hard and have fun. We refer to our school community as the "Ashton family," and we focus on developing the whole child, both mind and body. In addition to academic instruction, our entire faculty is dedicated to helping students learn healthy life practices and skills. Our school day starts with morning announcements and a "mindful moment" for students to ready themselves for school and learning. The Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports System (PBIS) addresses our students' social and emotional well-being and creates a climate of safety and belonging for all students. Students are provided with clear expectations and are recognized with a positive acknowledgment system. The PBIS team meets monthly to generate incentives for students and staff and to review school expectations, safety concerns, and general data. Specific classroom plans are developed to support students not responding to the schoolwide expectations. Individualized academic and social/behavior plans are also developed by the school's Multi-Tiered System of Support unit (MTSS). This team meets weekly to review data, problem solve, and to create and adjust plans to ensure student progress and success. In addition, the school offers English as a second language and special education services to qualifying students. Intervention services in math and reading are also offered to students falling below grade level. In terms of social and emotional support, we have a part time Guidance Counselor, School Psychologist, Social Worker and a District Behavior Specialist that offer support to students, families and the staff. Finally, students enjoy school-year long STEM, art, music, physical education, band, and health and guidance lessons.

We believe that a strong partnership between teachers and families is essential to a student's learning, development, and overall well-being. The school staff and parents work diligently to ensure our students get the best education experience possible in an environment that not only stimulates, but also encourages, learning, creativity, problem solving, and an appreciation for the world around them. Our school staff and Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) sponsor many events that promote a positive school experience and build a sense of community between staff, students, and families. These include field day, family picnic day, cultural night, reading week, a science fair, a schoolwide winter game day, music concerts, jog-a-thon, read-a-thon, and many more. A variety of additional events are planned specifically by our PTO to bring families together such as an adult night out, a holiday event, book fairs, trick or trunk, family dances, boys and girls night out, etc. The school also hosts a well attended welcome back celebration for families, two parent-teacher conference events, and an annual open house. AlphaBest offers before and after school daycare services to families in the building. We also offer after school enrichment programs such as band, karate, LEGOs, art classes, yoga, zumba, rock climbing and a before/after school academic tutoring/support program.

We believe in having an open line of communication with our families and maintain an updated school website, <https://cumberlandschools.org/ashton-elementary-school/>. Parents can also join "Ashton School Families" on Facebook. The principal sends weekly newsletters to parents and the staff to keep everyone informed and connected. Students receive a daily weekly communication folder that goes back and forth between home and school, and classroom teachers also send home frequent newsletters. Ashton students often engage in community service activities and are encouraged to do good deeds for one another to foster a sense of community and responsibility within and outside school.

A Student Council Program is offered to fourth and fifth graders to build leadership skills and promote community involvement. Student Council members are elected by their peers and help with school activities

such as the Thanksgiving food drive, "Recess Rocks" Program, school store, and daily morning announcements. We also offer a Safety Patrol Program, in which students receive training to assist with dismissal time. They help keep students safe while loading the bus or going home with parents. Students may also apply to be "classroom helpers" to assist teachers at the end of the school day.

Volunteers are always welcomed at Ashton School. Cumberland Volunteers offers a Reading is Fundamental program to our students three times a year, providing each child a free book of their choice to encourage reading. In addition, The Just Friends Program is a disability awareness program offered to fourth graders to raise awareness and acceptance of students with disabilities and teach that we are more alike than different.

The pandemic has impacted our entire school community. On March 13, 2020, the school closed its doors to in-person learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In a short time, teachers had to "reinvent themselves" to teach virtually and students adapt to online learning. Although more students have returned to in-person learning over a year later, we have transitioned to holding predominantly virtual events, such as virtual spirit weeks, fire drills, build a buddy, cake wars, etc. We also held "drive-by" celebrations. These events help us continue to build a sense of community, which people crave and miss. Virtual meetings have provided more access to meet with parents. Teachers are also able to collaborate virtually and attend virtual professional development sessions more often.

Ashton School is dedicated to building a positive learning community where students, teachers, and families can feel safe, supported and welcomed. The sign above our school doors reads, "Through these doors pass the greatest children in the world." Every single member of our staff believe these words. There is a true sense of love and community. Ashton Elementary school is not just a place of academic learning: it is an ever-growing, accepting, and nurturing family.

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

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

At Ashton School, we adopted Eureka Math® as a holistic K-5 curriculum. Our math program is meticulously coherent, with an intense focus on key concepts that layer over time, creating enduring knowledge. Students gain a complete body of math knowledge, not just a discrete set of skills. They use the same models and problem-solving methods from grade to grade, so math concepts stay with them, year after year. There is a standard for rigor, coherence, and focus in the classroom, so students gain a deeper understanding of the "why" behind the numbers, all while making math more enjoyable to learn and teach. The teacher's focus is on building deep, lasting understanding rather than just memorizing. Students are provided with knowledge in the context of the real world, rather than hypothetical scenarios. Knowledge is gained through consistent core skill development. The students' knowledge builds upon itself for stronger connections throughout the learning process. "Exit tickets" are used daily for data collection. Teachers can use the results to focus on individual student needs and drive instruction.

Zearn is an interactive platform that is used to supplement and reinforce Eureka Math. IXL is used to help progress monitor areas of need and help students close gaps. It is implemented and used during Intervention. These platforms have helped teachers support students' learning throughout distance and hybrid experiences.

Edulastic is a technology enhanced assessment platform for benchmarks, used in the classroom, or during distance learning. It allows teachers to provide formative assessments using high-quality item banks and diagnostic or curriculum-standard aligned assessments. These assessments provide teachers the opportunity to differentiate instruction and ensure students are working toward proficiency. Edulastic is also used for common assessments by grade level. These platforms allowed for a seamless transition when switching to remote learning.

Grades K-2 utilize Wonders from McGraw Hill. Our reading program is designed to foster a love of reading in all children. Through exploration of texts and daily development of their skills as readers, writers, speakers, and active listeners, students experience the power of literacy. Our focus is on teaching every child to be lifelong learners and critical thinkers. Daily reading lessons connect to Common Core standards, by using inspiring literature, and allows for integrated English language instruction and social-emotional needs. By providing a comprehensive set of connected resources for all learners in grades K-2, teachers are able to adapt instruction with confidence as students grow. The goal of the reading instruction is to strengthen skills, bolster learning, and encourage independence.

Wonders McGraw Hill Platform: Wonders has a digital platform that complements the core program. It includes daily instructional resources, instructional and informative videos, and games aligned with weekly phonics, spelling, grammar and vocabulary that reinforce the skills being learned each week. The platform includes common weekly and benchmark assessments used throughout the school year. This data is collected and shared at curriculum mapping team meetings and is used to direct instruction. This is a very useful platform that has allowed teachers to continue Wonders reading instruction despite the sudden move to online learning. Students were able to access all of the curriculum through the platform.

Wonders is accompanied by Wonderworks, a Tier 2 flexible literacy intervention program grounded in research that provides scaffolded support designed to accelerate students back to grade level.

Expeditionary Learning is the basis of the ELA Curriculum in grades 3,4,and 5. Grade level mapping teams have been created to strengthen this program and add supplemental materials to expand and explicitly teach the standards. Mapping teams have created common assessments at each grade level including multiple choice questions, constructed responses, and text based essay prompts. Rich literature (chapter books and picture books) are used to teach informational, poetry and narrative text. IXL is used to identify areas of need and assist students within those areas to help close the learning gap. Students progress is monitored and documented with STAR (Renaissance Learning For All).

SRSD (Self Regulated Strategy Development) is a writing framework for teaching both narrative and informational writing. It has been aligned with our core reading instruction in grades 2-5. This framework teaches students to read with a "writer's eye" and write with a "reader's eye." Children are given explicit instruction with topic introductions, identifying and explaining evidence, creating inferences about the evidence, and crafting conclusions. They are taught to use rich vocabulary, expand their sentence writing into more complex sentences, and use appropriate conventions. Common grade level benchmark writing assessments have been created to monitor growth over a year.

Social Studies topics are integrated in the ELA curriculum and programs. Supplementary chapter books and picture books are focused on various topics within the social studies and science content.

Gems Net Science kits are used in grades K-5. Students use a hands-on approach that utilizes scientific methods to investigate topics under earth and space, physical, and life science. They have access to online resources such as Foss Web for the accompanying text. Due to the pandemic and implementation of distance learning, grades K-2 were not able to implement science instructions as we did in previous years. To the extent possible, teachers focused on embedding it through ELA.

**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 Ashton School students participate in four itinerant areas: Music, Art, Physical Education, and STEM. These itinerant classes rotate on a six day schedule, meaning that students participate in Physical Education three times per cycle and each of the other content areas once per cycle. This year, the itinerant teachers have adapted to several teaching models including full distance learning, a mix of distance learning and hybrid (two days per week in person), and a mix of distance learning and full return to school (four days per week in person). Across all models, special area teachers have provided opportunities for students to receive instruction through recorded lessons, live streaming, and/or in-person instruction.

Ashton School's itinerant teachers implement a number of methods to support the acquisition of essential skills and knowledge. Teachers are provided with weekly opportunities to meet as Professional Learning Communities with other district teachers of the same content areas to align teaching models and assessments. Ashton's itinerant teachers have adjusted instruction to meet the unique limitations of the Covid era, such as having fourth and fifth grade students learn to play the virtual piano in music rather than the recorder. The Physical Education teachers adapted their lessons to utilize "choice boards" so that students could have the option of using equipment readily available in their homes. Engaging students virtually and measuring progress has also changed. For instance, Ashton's STEM teacher created Google Form exit tickets so that she can ensure students were actively engaged in lessons, record student progress, and identify areas in which students were struggling. While itinerant curricula always tie into core academics as much as possible, this year the Art curriculum has been called upon to support the Grade 4 Geometry unit and is teaching math skills very specifically through two art projects focused on the work of Wassily Kandinsky.

Engaging families has become more important than ever, as we have expected parents to take an active role in their children's education through distance learning. Itinerant teachers have employed a number of strategies to engage with families this year. For instance, understanding that families have different work schedules, teachers were able to provide recordings of lessons so that students and families could participate at a time that works best for them. Similarly, lessons were made available to students who have had to quarantine periodically throughout the year.

Teachers have utilized the Google Classroom platform to connect with families, send reminders about class times and topics, and alert students and families to have necessary materials on hand. Some teachers have offered virtual office hours to provide one-on-one support for students struggling with the material. In Phys-Ed class, the teachers have created a "Get Up and Move" calendar to provide breaks from technology and encourage students to perform activities and exercises with someone in their household.

Although teachers were able to provide flexible options this year, they have also worked hard to provide stability and comfort through familiar activities and routines that children recognize from years past. Of course, these have been implemented while also adapting to new cleaning procedures to maintain a safe and healthy school environment. For example, hand-held materials are still being utilized in all itinerant areas (e.g., musical instruments, sports equipment, chrome books), as long as they are able to be sanitized between uses.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

Ashton is a diverse community with students at all proficiency levels. Instruction is delivered with the intent to meet the needs of all students, using a growth mindset to encourage and support student learning. Students at Ashton participate in two, forty minute "What I Need (WIN)" intervention blocks daily. This dedicated time enables students to set academic goals based on standards and increase their overall skills. Tier two and three interventions from a specialist or interventionist occur at this time. This block also allows for specialized instruction for students with disabilities and multi-language learners to take place outside of core curriculum time. Students find this time beneficial because it has taught them to set goals, ask questions, and seek opportunities to expand their thinking and learning. Teachers use this intervention time to personalize instruction and further aid students. Instructional activities are determined based on classroom performance and standard assessments. Differentiated instruction during these blocks is essential because it enables students to focus specifically on skills and standards in which they struggle. Constant review of classroom performance and assessment allows both teachers and students to monitor progress toward proficiency. Teachers have common planning time weekly to collaborate and review student work and progress data. Platforms, such as Lexia, IXL, and Zearn, have enhanced learning opportunities for students and provided teachers the ability to monitor student performance and learning. Teachers are able to meet the needs of all learners through whole class, small group, and/or one-on-one instruction.

A multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) is used to monitor students who need additional support academically, socially, and emotionally. Students are assessed three times a year using universal screeners to determine the students that would need additional tiered academic support. MTSS meetings with teachers are held regularly to discuss student outcomes of universal screeners, social-emotional needs, diagnostic assessments, and classroom data in order to determine the level of support needed. Students that receive intervention from a reading specialist or math interventionist are provided personalized, research-based interventions that enhance their learning and target specific areas of deficiency. The targeted reading and math skills are monitored and assessed throughout each intervention period.

Special education and multi-language learners utilize this intervention time to enhance their literacy and math skills. Students are provided with explicit instruction that is tailored to their individual needs. Special educators, language teachers, reading specialists, and math interventionists work collaboratively with classroom teachers to modify assignments and provide instructional tools, such as visual models, technology, and small group instruction. Multi-language learners are assessed yearly with the ACCESS test, in addition to yearly monitoring to measure language acquisition and proficiency. These students are supported in a variety of ways, such as in-class and pull-out models, utilizing the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol.



## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

Ashton is a PBIS school with a focus on building relationships not only with our students, but with parents and the neighboring community as well. Positive relationships are what lead to student success, and Ashton strives to embed opportunities for connection throughout the day. We begin each morning with morning announcements that include the Pledge of Allegiance, the Ashton School Pledge, a review of the monthly character trait, and a mindful moment to instill the importance of slowing down and being present. These announcements are available online for remote learning and are also delivered in-person over the intercom with students leading the announcements for the school. Each month students are selected to receive a Principal's Award for demonstrating various character traits or the Student of the Month Award which promotes the PBIS expectations of being respectful, responsible, and ready to learn.

The Multi-Tiered System Supports (MTSS) team meets weekly to discuss students who are struggling academically, socially, and/or emotionally. The team includes administration, the school psychologist, social worker, school counselor, district behavior specialist, the student's parents/guardians, and any teacher who works with the student. Positive interventions are put in place and monitored every 4-6 weeks in order to see if the student is making progress. Social, emotional, and positive behavior interventions may include social skills groups delivered by a mental health provider, a Check-In/Check-Out behavior tracking sheet wherein the student receives embedded coaching on targeted goals throughout the school day, and helper jobs to increase students' feelings of positivity and self-worth. Many students begin and end each day checking in with the school counselor or school psychologist. This not only creates a bonding relationship between the student and school staff, but also promotes positivity, motivation, and a sense of belonging. Students are also encouraged to meet with mental health staff when necessary. Requests may come from parents, teachers, or the students themselves. This year, check-ins are not limited to in-person learners, but also those struggling with distance learning. Together, the student and staff member problem-solve to help the student navigate their difficulty so that they can feel better and return to learning. School counselors utilize a preventative and proactive curriculum through their monthly classroom guidance lessons on social/emotional topics (either online or in-person). Through these lessons, students are engaged in collaborative projects, discussions, and role-plays, where they learn essential skills to support them as lifelong learners, help them reach their fullest potential, and become valuable members of society. Teachers are encouraged to utilize consistent language or techniques outlined in these lessons so that students are receiving ongoing instruction in the areas of social and emotional learning.

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

A partnership between school, family and community is key to the success of our school and the success of our students. Family engagement is encouraged through our partnership with the parent-teacher organization and the many social and academic events offered to families throughout the year. Families contribute to and celebrate student learning by participating in events such as our annual celebration of learning, a science fair, family fitness day, reading week, mystery readers, Town Hall and Fidelity Investments Art Gallery displays, and music concerts. An Open House and various parent workshops are also offered to provide families with information and strategies to support their children at home. Some examples or workshops offered have been, "A Parent's Guide to Reading," "Preparing for your child for RICAS," "A Parenting Workshop," and "How to prepare your child for Kindergarten."

The pandemic has limited the number of social events we have been able to offer families this year. However, our PTO and teachers have been very creative in finding ways to connect with each other and the community. Some of the events offered this year include dine out nights to help support local restaurants during the pandemic (while they donate a portion of their profit back to our PTO), spirit weeks in which our online and in-person students dress up to different themes, and pictures of our students and staff that are shared and celebrated through our Ashton Facebook page. Family events like "cake wars," The Roger Williams Park Zoo light display family night, and the "Build a Friend" activity have been fun and memorable. Teachers have also offered fun activities, such as recording read alouds for families to have

their own “story time” at home and virtual field trips with students. Many classrooms took advantage of the "Adopt A Cow" program offered through the Dairy Excellence Foundation.

Our partnership with AlphaBest allows us to offer on-site before and after school day care and enrichment activities. Additional enrichment programs are also available through our Parent Teacher Organization and our staff. A before and after school academic support program is offered by the teachers every year to help close learning gaps and boost academics. The PTO also offers fun clubs that encourage creativity and develop our students interest in leisure activities, fitness, art, music, etc.

In order to address the needs of some of our families, our school guidance counselor, school psychologist, social worker and principal work closely with The Family Care Community Partnership (FCCP) of RI. This is a Comprehensive Community Action Program that offers wraparound services to families at risk of abuse, neglect, placement or DCYF involvement, etc.

We also have a long-standing relationship with the Feinstein Foundation, participating in their Good Deeds Program to promote community service events such as a food drive, adopt a family, adopt a grandparent, a kindness tree, etc.

Fostering family and community partnerships are at the heart of our school mission and our goal to develop the whole child. The pandemic has changed the way we are able to connect and reach our families and community, but it has not stopped us from continuing to work collaboratively. Venues such as our principal’s weekly emails, our school Facebook page, teacher newsletters, and virtual meetings and workshops also keep everyone connected and informed.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

Ashton School created a "Return to School Task Force" shortly after the 2019-2020 school year ended to prepare for various scenarios for the reopening of school in the 2020-2021 school year. The task force included stakeholders from the school as well as the Ashton Community. All members of the team were able to have input and plan for the safe return of students and staff. The plan was shared with all staff early on to assist with planning, and regular meetings were scheduled to support everyone with the reopening of school.

It is worth noting that the collegiality at Ashton is quite remarkable. In addition to weekly common planning times when teachers meet with grade level or subject partners, teachers are often seen planning and sharing with their colleagues on a regular basis. Teachers have opened their classrooms to others to model how they are using technology in their classrooms and shared meeting notes, presentations, technology tips, web resources, and pictures to support one another through this ever-evolving process of digital learning. Much of our professional development has been centered on what we as an Ashton Community have needed, as well as resources and webinars opened to us by our district and state.

Our school community and the district have provided us with additional resources to help support teachers and staff through distance learning. We have had additional teacher assistant support and two dedicated building substitute teachers. These additional staff members have been made available for a variety of purposes, especially for covering teachers to support their professional development opportunities mentioned above. Teachers were allowed to purchase materials to help create a supportive and safe environment in their classrooms. Some of those purchases included portable document cameras, blue-tooth speakers, laptop risers, see-through shields and dividers, sneeze guards, storage crates, individual recess bins, easily cleaned playground equipment for each class, storage and organization totes, signs, cones, and tape to post procedures, cleaning supplies, and books about distance learning that were shared with both students and staff.

The feeling of being part of a school "family" is Ashton School’s best trait. Teachers and staff are included in decision making, feedback is welcomed, and we support each other and feel supported by our principal, parent/teacher organization, and larger community.

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

The school principal's leadership style is collaborative, which builds leadership among the staff and emphasizes shared decision making. The Building Leadership Team is formed of representatives from various grades, support staff, mental health providers, and a parent liaison. The work of this team is focused on analyzing schoolwide data (State assessment data, Survey Works, etc.) and creating annual/long term goals for the school. The team then creates action plans to execute the goals with input from the staff and parents. They help with developing the school budget, the hiring of staff, and decisions focused on student achievement.

The School Positive Behavior Intervention team maintains a pulse on school culture. It is also formed of grade level representatives, support staff, and a parent. Schoolwide discipline data is reviewed every other month to address concerns and set up incentive activities for students following the expectations. Students are rewarded for following the expectations with schoolwide assemblies, snow day activities, recess rocks games, a school store, raffles, etc. Staff "potluck" activities are also planned to motivate the staff and build cohesiveness.

The Multi-Tiered System of Support team analyzes individual student performance data and creates individual academic and social/emotional plans for students in need of support. The team helps us check in on students falling behind academically or in need of social or emotional support. The work of the committee is key in responding to the unique needs of the school and provide guidance and direction to the work that is needed in the short and long term.

The staff is also invited to provide input for the school budget and develop new initiatives. Being a small school, the majority of teachers volunteer to serve on the committees or participate in sub-committees that execute the initiatives generated by the main committees. Some of our subcommittees include, the science expo committee, safety care team, student council advisor, recess rocks, cultural events committee, etc.

In addition, each grade level has content curriculum mapping leaders that work with our district coordinators and administration on revising the curriculum. Curriculum revisions are made based on the needs of the current students and the standards. Teachers have common planning time once a week to meet with their grade level partners. The curriculum mapping teams make adjustments to the pace in the curriculum and help prioritize the content based on what teachers are able to cover through the various models of instruction utilized during the pandemic.

Monthly faculty and curriculum meetings are also planned to share information, resources, and provide training for the staff. This year, many of the staff meetings have focused on discussing the academic and emotional needs of our students and the staff. We have shared resources for distance learning, offered technology support, team building activities, and discussed raising self awareness and shared self-care strategies. The meeting agendas and training have been planned by the principal with staff input to address the needs of the school community.

The school task force team has been actively engaged in planning and problem solving in response to the pandemic. During weekly virtual meetings with support from the district, the team developed different learning models (online, hybrid, etc.). The school procedures and protocols have been revised often to respond to the Department of Health's recommendations and CDC guidelines. The principal met weekly with each grade level team from March until the end of last school year to review the learning models, receive feedback, share resources, and implement the new procedures. The district's task force team helped guide the work of each building. Our principal is a member of the district task force and continues to meet by-weekly with the district's team to bring recommendations to the school.

Communication has been key in the development and rollout of so many changes impacting our school this year. Several staff surveys have been administered to help identify our needs, along with a recent student and parent survey conducted by the state. Brainstorming solutions in a collaborative manner with the staff and parents has proven to be positive and beneficial in addressing the needs and concerns of all. The school principal keeps in close communication with families and the staff via weekly newsletters, PTO monthly meetings, staff weekly virtual meetings, email, and increased professional development days. Our school uses an all-hands approach in which everyone is a valued member and contributor of the school community.

## **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

Teachers and staff at Ashton School work to ensure equity, cultural awareness, and respect in the classroom and within the school.

Students are exposed to a spectrum of multicultural topics and resources throughout the year. The students in grade 5, for example, study an entire unit in their English Language Arts curriculum on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which focuses on the fair and just treatment of individuals of all races and nationalities. In addition to diversifying the curriculum, teachers and staff are sensitive to the many different backgrounds and learning styles of our students. Special educators, language teachers, reading specialists, math interventionists work collaboratively with classroom teachers to modify assignments and provide instructional tools in order to meet the individual needs of all students.

The Ashton School community of staff, parents and teachers are diligent in ensuring cultural awareness. This is shown through our annual, school-wide cultural night. Since 2017, a committee consisting of members from the faculty and from the school community have met to plan and organize a cultural night that celebrates the diversity of our students and their families. Many countries are represented and the students enjoy researching facts about their family's background. The families at Ashton School also play an active role in showcasing their cultures and traditions, including traditional styles of dress, food, and entertainment. The culminating event is held on a weeknight for all to enjoy. Furthermore, to bring awareness to the school community, the Cultural Committee planned activities that included read alouds, a lantern craft, and a reading comprehension sheet. These planned activities helped to expose our school to the different cultures that make up our diverse community.

Ashton School faculty and staff members value the opinions of our families. Each school year, our families are administered the SurveyWorks Family Survey. This survey gives families the opportunity to provide feedback about our school culture and their children's opportunities to learn. Once SurveyWorks results are compiled, the Building Leadership Team (BLT) at Ashton School meets to analyze our strengths and weaknesses and make proper adjustments. We pride ourselves on our abilities to celebrate our successes, but to also accept constructive criticism and work to ensure an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students.

Teachers and staff at Ashton School are sensitive to current events that are happening within the nation. The recent discovery of strong racial undertones and controversial cartoons from Dr. Seuss's earlier stories, for example, encouraged the committee that plans Read Across America events within the school to make some modifications. Our Read Across America events this year promoted diverse books that encouraged compassion, empathy, inclusivity, and were more reflective of the cultures in our school community. A Read Across America virtual library promoting the aforementioned values was shared with all classrooms within the school.

We are a school that takes amazing pride in our cultural diversity. We are a caring and kind staff that work to instill respect for oneself and others in our students.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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The single process that we believe has been the most influential in how our school has successfully addressed COVID-19 since school closures in March of 2020 is our MTSS team. The Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) model aligns our resources in order for us to provide high quality instruction and interventions that are matched to our student needs. This team meets weekly about identified students who are struggling academically, socially, and/or emotionally. The team includes administration, the school psychologist, social worker, school counselor, academic interventionists, district behavior specialist, special educators, the student's parents/guardians, and any teacher who works with the student. Interventions are implemented and monitored every four to six weeks in order to see if the student is making progress. These interventions are specifically tailored to each student's needs, whether it be academic or social/emotional.

At the start of the pandemic, this team remained intact and there was no interruption in meetings. Although the format became Google Meets, our process closely mirrored how we conducted these meetings prior to the school closure. During in-person meetings we had a note taker, time keeper, facilitator, and a data analyst. We adapted this process during COVID-19 by adding a role to this team. A point person/case manager was specifically assigned to each student and their family if a student was considered a non-responder. Non responders were students who were not responding to interventions, might not be showing up to Google Meets, were not handing in or completing assignments, and had general absenteeism. We thought a point person was necessary in order to streamline communication with families so that multiple adults were not reaching out regarding the same concerns. This was an important role to establish, as families were already overwhelmed due to the pandemic. Aside from the addition of this role, our MTSS team functioned as though we were still in-person.

Reviewing data is an integral part of this team. We look at academic and social/emotional data to really get the whole picture of a student and their needs. Through our "data digs," we can report an increase in attendance, work completion, and attendance to class Google Meets, which directly impacts the student's academic success. This increase in academic performance is noted in our benchmark data (STAR/IXL). It is largely due to the cohesive partnership between colleagues on the MTSS team and their willingness to support student achievement through targeted interventions that we have been able to successfully navigate the academic/social-emotional challenges posed by COVID-19.