

U.S. Department of Education
2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Great Plain School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 10 Stadley Rough Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Danbury State CT Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 06811-4023

County Fairfield County

Telephone (203) 797-4749 Fax (203) 830-6581

Web site/URL https://sites.google.com/danbury.k12.ct.us/gps E-mail smithke@danbury.k12.ct.us

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.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Kevin Walston E-mail walstk@danbury.k12.ct.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Danbury School District Tel. (203) 797-4749

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.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mrs. Rachel Chaleski
(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.

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

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 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 2016 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2021-2022) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for 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 in the school as of October 1, 2021 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	34	22	56
1	21	21	42
2	29	28	57
3	21	23	44
4	22	19	41
5	23	19	42
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	150	132	282

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 7 % Asian
 - 4 % Black or African American
 - 56 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 29 % White
 - 4 % 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 2020 - 2021 school year: 10%

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, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	23
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	28
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	282
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.10
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

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

Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, French, Gujarati, Kannada, Khmer (Cambodian), Urdu, Spanish, Portuguese, and Kurdish.

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 38 %
106 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 41 %

Total number students who qualify: 115

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 13 %
38 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>1</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>8</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>1</u> Developmental Delay | <u>7</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>4</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>13</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>3</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 18
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	14
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	9
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	8
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	0

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 20:1

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

Required Information	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	93%	93%	93%	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 2021.

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

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

Yes No

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

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

Great Plain Elementary School provides and promotes educational excellence for all students. Vision: Great Plain Elementary School recognizes and respects student diversity while providing a safe, nurturing environment that is conducive to learning. We have high expectations for all students while preparing them to be lifelong learners.

16. Provide a URL link to or text of the school’s nondiscrimination policy.

<https://z2policy.cabe.org/cabe/browse/danbury/danbury/z20000004>

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

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Great Plain Elementary School is one of 13 elementary schools located in Danbury, Connecticut. The school is a culturally diverse learning community that provides educational opportunities for 282 students in grades kindergarten through five. The racial and ethnic composition is as follows: American Indian or Alaska Native 0%, Asian 7%, Black or African American 4%, Hispanic or Latino 56%, White 20%, two or more races 4%. Forty-one percent of the students that attend Great Plain Elementary School are eligible for free and reduced lunch, and 67% of the student population speak another language other than English. Great Plain Elementary School is comprised of 14 general education classes, two self-contained behavior classes, as well as Multilanguage Language Learner and Scientific Research-Based Intervention programs.

Great Plain Elementary School believes in working with all stakeholders and community members to strengthen our students' academic and social-emotional growth. All teachers provide time for students to participate in a social-emotional group discussion each day. The Connecticut State Department of Education has identified Great Plain Elementary School as a School of Distinction for academic growth during 2018, 2019, and 2020 school years.

The school was awarded the first “Be Kind” award in the nation in 2019. The “Be Kind” award is part of Ben’s Bells, a foundation that symbolizes kindness and the power to touch another person’s life while making a difference in the community. The school social worker and psychologist provide community time for each class for 40 minutes once a week. The students discuss what makes a community successful, how to help others, the importance of friendship, and it just takes one to assist someone. Daily incorporation of programs including “Whole Body Listening Larry at School” and “Choose Love” are used. Character education words are posted and discussed each month. As part of our culture, we expect each student to define the terms and put the words into practice throughout the year.

To maintain academic excellence, all certified staff members maintain a Google Classroom that features assignments, activities, news events, Google Hangout, and slides to educate our students and parents in the community. We provide Professional Learning Communities (PLC) time for teachers to learn and grow in their profession. Great Plain teachers meet with their grade-level partners twice a month for two hours to discuss student growth, performance, and data from district or state assessments. Teachers can also meet three times a week during common planning time. A collaborative culture manifests in sharing the data with the principal and parents.

In closing the achievement gap for the children at Great Plain Elementary School, the school and community developed a shared vision. The community meets once a month to discuss concerns, goals, and what is needed to support students, staff, and parents. The community and staff members discuss the student body, student success, areas of concern, and what everyone’s vision is for student outcomes. The staff and principal meet with parents three times a year to discuss the curriculum and student growth and performance. Further, the principal collaborates with the Parent Teacher Organization to provide online activities, books, materials, and workshops to support family learning.

The Jericho Foundation is a partnering community organization that provides support for our students. These retired teachers, bankers, doctors, construction workers, project managers, and nurses enjoy working weekly with our students. The volunteers can provide one-on-one assistance and the necessary tender love and care each child needs to grow and flourish as a learner.

During the community and parent meetings, the stakeholders review past and present student data and the social and economic challenges of the school. They discuss ideas that would support all learners and stakeholders alike. The teachers and principal meet to intervene for students at all levels using a flexible scheduling model. The model allows students to be assigned to teachers on various grade levels to meet their academic needs. This allows students to be challenged, access the curriculum, and be nurtured to grow as a leader.

The teachers and principal use Wiggins’ and McTighe’s Understanding by Design model to incorporate the

Common Core Standards. With the collaboration of the staff, principal, and community members, the fifth-grade scores rose from 50% of the students reading on grade level to 70% in one year, and the third-grade scores rose from 40% to 60% in reading in one year. We provided opportunities for students to attend before school and after-school classes to support their children's learning. Bus transportation was provided four days a week in order for students to attend the enrichment program. The students attended math and reading classes from 7:00 a.m. until 8:15 a.m. Students received instruction according to their needs each morning for 45 minutes, four days a week. Several students were able to participate in classes after-school. The staff members used games and hands-on activities to encourage students to take risks and promote problem-solving and reasoning skills.

Great Plain Elementary School, along with the nation, closed in March of 2020 due to the pandemic. During the pandemic, the teachers and support staff members were in contact with the parents and guardians in reference to food, shelter, and clothing weekly. The staff members and principal delivered food to the members of the community as well as held a food drive to support the community. Many of the students did not have access to WiFi or a computer. The district provided hot spots for students in need. The district used the Google Classroom platform, IXL for math, RAZ Kids, Read Theory, Mobymax, and Flipgrid for instruction. Ninety percent of the students met their teachers online each morning, ready to learn. The teachers were able to teach and meet students in small groups to support their learning throughout the day. The principal and staff members met with parents as often as needed to support their basic needs and provided a list of community resources, agencies, and clinics for their mental/physical stability.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas:

Great Plain Elementary School's overarching philosophy is inclusion and provides a safe environment for students to learn and take risks. We do our best to accomplish this by having a clear understanding of the goals of the district as well as the school goals. We respect and understand everyone's role as the teacher, student, parent, and community member. The curriculum provided for the students of Danbury Public Schools consists of the humanistic approach to learning. We believe educating our students is in the best interest of the community we serve. The district continues to provide teaching techniques and strategies that include active and blended learning opportunities for our students. It is our job as a school community to facilitate the thinking and learning process for all students.

Establishing a safe and nurturing environment that respects and values diversity as part of our daily routine is essential for learning. Building character is an important part of the culture and climate of Great Plain Elementary School. The students are rewarded by staff weekly and monthly for doing their best daily. They are reminded that every day is a new day. "It doesn't matter what happened yesterday or the day before, today is a new day. Try and make the most of today and every day" is stated by the principal in a morning message daily. Providing a welcoming and loving environment for students, staff, and parents, allows everyone the opportunity to grow and master their goals.

1b. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Danbury Public School's core curriculum is aligned with the Connecticut Common Core Standards. Great Plain Elementary School students are engaged in a balanced literacy approach to learning. Each day, the students participate in a language arts block for 90 minutes, math block for 70 minutes, specials for 45 minutes, social studies/science for 45 minutes, and What I Need Now (WINN) blocks for 40 minutes.

Columbia Teachers College Reading and Writing Program units of study are used K-5 to provide opportunities for students to practice their thinking and express their thoughts through stories and ideas. In grades K—2, the school uses the Being a Reader Program. The reading program addresses phonemic awareness, phonics, syllabication, encoding, handwriting, fluency, high-frequency words, and comprehension. The teachers focus on making sure students are motivated and confident about their learning. This program helps students to become optimistic about their education. The teachers monitor student progress frequently for growth to drive instruction.

The curricular resources were part of a learning experience driven by the Common Core Standards. With a laser-like focus on standards, teachers are able to provide instruction that deepens comprehension and allows for the deconstruction of grade-level text. Although at times, the programs and materials do not meet the needs of all students. Great Plain staff found it essential to supplement materials to support learning, such as closed reading activities, common grade-level text, and the use of manipulatives. Although at times, the programs and materials do not meet the needs of all students. Great Plain staff found it essential to supplement materials to support learning, such as closed reading activities, common grade-level text, and the use of manipulatives.

1c. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Teachers in grades K-2 use Illustrative Mathematics (IM) to teach math. Illustrative Mathematics addresses content and the Common Core Standards to provide opportunities for problem-solving, real-world contexts, and constructive/persuasive arguments. The digital platform allows for interactive lessons, assessments, and differentiated instruction for the students at Great Plain Elementary School. Teachers of students in grades 3—5 use Pearson Investigations for Mathematics to expose students to the inquiry-based approach to

learning math. Students apply mathematical knowledge to solve problems.

Teachers use formative and summative assessments to monitor student progress toward mastery of grade-level standards continually. The teachers use the assessments data to drive instruction and create small groups to address individual needs. Students deficient in reading, writing, or math are assigned to Tier II intervention and, if necessary, to Tier III instruction with a specialist. The students are assessed every four to six to assess their progress. This may include changing instructional practices and providing more challenging projects which allow children the opportunity to analyze and synthesize information. The information is presented and reviewed with the principal every six to eight weeks. The school recognizes the need to analyze, prescribe, and assess student work.

1d. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

The school is engaged in Discovery Science which allows students to participate in hands-on and online activities. The staff incorporates science into the language arts activities. All kindergarten through five grade students are taught the Common Core Science Standards listed by the State of Connecticut. The topics include Sunlight Warm the Earth, Living vs. Non-Living Things, Habitats, Sound and Light, Solids and Liquids, Ecosystems, Weather, Brain Processing of Senses, Food, and Chemical Reactions. The students are instructed during a whole group session and then participate in centers that address multisensory learners. The students participate in hands-on learning and inquiry-based projects. The parents and community members are invited to assist the students and staff with projects. During the pandemic, the parents and staff members purchased soil, rocks, batteries, and other necessary materials that would allow students to participate in science online with the class. The parents and staff members delivered the materials to the children's home. The staff assesses students formally and informally using district, grade-level, and state assessments. Students in grade five often use Mystery Science as a supplement to address standards to prepare for the NGSS Assessment given by the state of Connecticut.

1e. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Social studies text and information are often incorporated into the Language Arts period of the day. The staff members of Great Plain Elementary School utilize the Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks that are linked to the Connecticut Core Standards. The frameworks prepare students for college, career, and civic life. The staff incorporates technology and online activities to engage students in learning about geography, themselves, communities and making a difference in the state, nation, and world. The staff allows students to participate in plays and skits to help the children learn and retain the information taught. The students use their journals to note their findings or information learned based on their investigated topic. Great Plain Elementary School incorporates in-person and virtual field trips to expose students to different settings other than the classroom. Each month the students celebrate various cultural activities and learn about people that are a part of our history and community. During the pandemic, the staff and parents delivered materials to the student's homes in order for the students to be able to participate in class projects.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Great Plain Elementary School realizes that each student is unique and has a hidden talent. Therefore, students participate in music, art, physical education, and media classes. The special area classes meet for 40 minutes a day, one day a week. The general education teachers often meet with the special area teachers to discuss areas of academic concern. Collaboratively, the teachers develop activities/strategies to assist students in learning in class and in specials.

In music class, the students are exposed to various types of genres while learning the fundamentals of music. The students learn about tone, beats, how to sing, and movement. The children listen for rhythms and patterns in music. The district provides free string lessons for students in grades three, four, and five; and instrumental lessons for students in grades four and five. The band, orchestra, and choir perform in-person and virtually twice a year.

The art curriculum is aligned with the state and national standards. Students create two and three-dimensional artwork in various mediums. The children create self-portraits, drawings, and sculptures. Art allows the children to use their critical thinking skills and demonstrate problem-solving when creating artwork. The art teacher regularly displays student work throughout the school.

The physical education teachers promote health education and wellness with Great Plain Elementary School students. The children are exposed to various sports activities. Each year, the students participate in the Jump Rope for Heart campaign. Physical education teachers incorporate music to promote learning. In order to meet the physical fitness standards required by the state, students self-evaluate their fitness levels and create end-of-year goals in accordance with state accountability guidelines. By providing abundant positive reinforcement to students, our teachers inspire students to view physical fitness as a lifelong endeavor. The students understand “you are what you eat” Therefore, the children are happy to make healthy food choices for breakfast, lunch, snack, and dinner.

The media specialist works with the homeroom teachers to incorporate technology with reading, writing, and math. The media specialist exposes the students to various authors and genres to promote a love for reading for all grade levels. The teacher assists the students with creating slideshow presentations and projects in grades two through five. Through frequent content integration presented by the media specialist, the students are interested in life science, matter, space, and their history. Through exploration of the content material, students are presented with information that moves them from past memorization to application and practice of the content.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

The Great Plain Elementary School team believe it is important to focus on student achievement for ALL students. We use the Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) approach to differentiated instruction for students. The SRBI team consists of the school social worker, psychologist, homeroom teachers, Multi-Language Learner teachers, resources teachers, behavior teachers, and principal. The team meets once a week to discuss academic challenges as well as behaviors that inhibit student learning. The students receive tiered intervention to support their learning to close the achievement gap. The team monitors student growth to determine how to group students for intervention. The teachers meet during the week to collaborate with their colleagues to identify strategies and other supports needed to assist students. The interventions address the individual needs of learners that are provided by the homeroom teacher, specialist, and or support staff. The classroom teachers meet with students for at least 40 minutes a day four times per week to provide direct instruction. Based on student data, groups are monitored and adjusted to create flexible groups specific to common needs. The groups and data are monitored every four to six weeks. The Jericho Partners visit the school three days a week to read to students and assist with our students' writing and math assignments.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Students that perform above grade level in all core areas are challenged weekly. The students are grouped based on project-based and inquiry-based assignments. The teachers motivate and instruct students to be divergent thinkers. The activities give the children the chance to develop their critical thinking and deepen their understanding of complex content. Students are instructed in activities that are above their grade level. Lessons and assignments are completed on their Chromebooks. Students present the information orally to the class, which enhances their verbal and speaking presentation skills. The Jericho Partners work with our

students to complete project-based learning and provide materials needed to promote higher-order thinking skills.

3c. Special education:

The special education students at Great Plain Elementary School have daily access to the content core classes. The students have access to various resources according to their individual needs. The students are supported through pull-out as well as push-in models. Though the students receive special instruction based on their needs, the lessons are sometimes modified to support student growth. Communication reports are sent to parents daily as needed. Progress monitoring reports are sent home three times a year to inform parents of progress made towards their child's goals and objectives.

3d. English Language Learners, if a special program or intervention is offered:

Multi-Language Learner makes up 40% of the population at Great Plain Elementary School. The children are from Bengali, India, Egypt, China, Japan, South America, and Hispanic/Latin countries. In order to teach language acquisition development skills, students are instructed to play games, use technology, and practice speaking the English language. The staff members work with the students in small and large group instruction. When children are fully immersed in the classroom, they are expected to converse with peers and use visual clues/aids that are provided by the teacher during the lessons. In many instances, the support staff continuously reviews the new information, building on prior student knowledge. The Multi-Language Learner students are prompted by the teacher to share with a partner what they have learned as well as share their background information as it relates to the topic of discussion. Many of the teachers use charts and pictures throughout the classroom to support learners. The teachers implemented and used the E. L. Achieve Program to teach phonics and language development to students that speak English as a Second language. The Multi-Language Learner teachers use the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). The strategies from the program are used for both content and language academics to support Multi-Language Learners.

3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant, homeless), if a special program or intervention is offered:

Students identified as homeless have access to the curriculum and other resources as needed. The staff and parent organization provide materials and resources for needed and or homeless families. The parents feel comfortable contacting the principal and social worker to share their problems and or to get food and shelter. The principal often will contact the district liaison in reference to a place for students/parents to live, eat, and work.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Great Plain Elementary School believes a positive and healthy school culture and climate are the foundations of high-quality learning environments and create the conditions for effective teaching and learning. We take pride in providing a safe and nurturing environment for all students, staff, and parents.

Upon arriving at school, the staff and principal greet the students daily. Students enter the school and are welcomed by staff in the hallway, at breakfast, and while walking to class. Students are greeted with music in the class and halls. The students will take the time to explain to the staff what is happening to them at the moment or how they are feeling. The safety advocate and staff are always visible, leading to mutual trust and respect between students and staff. Great Plain students regularly share their thoughts and demonstrate learning in front of their peers. This drives engagement and accountability while concurrently increasing peer-to-peer academic feedback. Examples include announcements through Google Meet, talent shows, classroom plays, displayed inventions, and presentations created and presented by students on history and other students' backgrounds/cultures.

The Choose Love Program promotes school-wide behavior expectations for all students. Activities and lessons involve students and ask for feedback on how children should behave and treat one another. Students create posters and rules that are displayed throughout the school. The children are surveyed for ideas and activities that motivate them to learn and do their best daily. The staff and principal take the initiative to make sure the activities and ideas are things that are done to build trust and motivate students to learn.

The school often has Friday dances to celebrate success or have fun. Our children gave us ideas and suggestions they wanted to have as a part of the dance Friday activities. The kids suggested glow sticks, a DJ, and games for the party. Additionally, they create crafts and participate in activities with their parents and teachers after the school day. Each week, the students celebrate school pride by wearing their Great Plain or Be Kind shirts to school. The homeroom that shows the most spirit receives an award or extra recess for participation. The shirts are donated by the community to the school so that everyone has an opportunity to participate in the activity each week. At least three times a year, the local fire department and police department visit the school to read and talk with students about the importance of education and safety procedures.

Students participate in “Start With Hello” yearly. The program promotes inclusiveness in order for students to feel a part of the community. This is part of the Sandy Hook Promise to promote kindness and reduce isolation. A pep rally is held every year to motivate and inspire students to do their best and score high on the state and district assessments. Every class, grades K-5, create a motivational cheer or chant for the pep rally. The students enjoy the competition as well as having the Danbury High School band and cheerleaders visiting and participating in this activity. During COVID, the staff and students created crafts, dances, and posters. A video was created that captured events over the year. The video was emailed to the community. The video included parents, students, and staff doing creative lessons of the year.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Great Plain Elementary School could not have been a thriving school community without the support of the parents. We are blessed as a school community to have parents that are actively involved in the school and value education. The Parent Teacher Organization fundraisers donate funds, clothes, furniture, and volunteers many service hours to our school community. Each day, parents send their very best to school and expect that the school will keep their children safe and provide high-quality education where their children are able to express themselves at any time of the day.

Our school community is in contact with parents weekly to discuss attendance, academic progress, behaviors, or just to say hello. The staff and community work collaboratively in the best interest of the students. The parent organization has teamed with the school for years to provide books, materials for

projects, and online sites to assist children in their learning. The parents realize the need to provide other community members resources to assist and support their child's learning. The school and community meet for ice cream socials, pizza, bingo, craft, and curriculum night as well as meet the "new family nights."

Kindergarten orientation is held each year. Parents visit the school and speak with the teachers. During COVID, the parents were allowed to meet the teachers outside with the students. The staff and principal discussed the routines for the day, showed the parents how to log in to online platforms, and provided the parents with materials needed to support their child's learning. All new families were invited to meet the teachers at school to learn about Danbury Public Schools and to learn what activities and outside agencies are available to support them.

During the pandemic, in order to maintain our collaborative community, returning students met their teachers on the playground or field. The students and parents sat in a circle discussing routines and answering questions from the parents and students. The families were shown a live video on their laptops. The parents were able to view the school and mitigation strategies that were put in place in order to keep the children safe. The staff bagged up items to send home with the children and supplied books to read and materials for math and science. Parents were supportive by providing wipes, tissue, and other supplies needed for all students to participate at home and school. The Great Plain community worked together with the school to provide food packages and gift cards to many of the families in need during COVID. The principal and staff members personally dropped off the items to the family. This was done to assist parents that did not have a car and to protect the parent's integrity and dignity.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Great Plain Elementary School prides itself on creating an environment where everyone is valued on all levels. The teachers and the administrator, with the support of the Parent Teacher Organization, work together to communicate high expectations to support the community they serve. At the beginning of each year, the principal provides a welcome back breakfast and lunch to start the year. As a reminder, the staff gathers together in a circle to reflect on the previous year's activities and the vision for the coming school year. We discuss and share our purpose and commitment as to why we chose this profession. We make a concerted effort to discuss how we will work together to become a more cohesive team to serve our students and community.

The principal presents the current data to school staff to discuss our "wonderings and noticings" and set goals for the year. The grade-level staff will gather to strategically plan goals for the year. The team reviews past and present data to discuss instructional strategies to promote growth and academic performance. After reviewing the data, the grade level teams decide on the professional development needed to grow as teachers and to enhance student learning. The paras and tutors are an intricate part of the learning community. They are invited to participate in all staff development activities and gatherings.

In order to stay abreast of current teaching strategies and practices, teachers participate in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) three times a month. Twice a month, the district provides 90 minutes of staff development in the content areas of math, science, and reading. Once a month, in-house staff development is led by a teacher or grade level team. The staff develop creative instructional strategies that motivate, promote and encourage each other to take risks. During COVID, the staff shared various platforms used to teach students online. The staff created a shared folder that included lesson plans, activities, and grade-level assessments. The staff met weekly to discuss their feelings, emotions, and stress in order to support each other through the pandemic.

The Great Plain staff celebrates birthdays each month. The staff exchanges secret snowflake gifts during the holiday season. Spirit Week is held three times a year. The students and staff celebrate their favorite sports team, crazy hair, socks, and hat day. A local community-certified masseuse provides massages and relaxation techniques for the staff on an ongoing basis. WFSB Connecticut television station channel 3 sends out a "shout out" to recognize the staff for their hard work and dedication to the community.

4. School Leadership:

The Great Plain Elementary School principal believes all children can learn as well as grow and achieve at high levels. The principal and staff have been recognized as a “School of Distinction” for the past three years. The principal, along with the staff, was invited by the Connecticut Department of Education to be recognized and celebrated for their achievements. On the Smarter Balanced Assessment, our high needs students outperformed the non-high needs students on the math and reading assessment in the area of overall growth and performance. The Great Plain Elementary School principal is able to provide 240 minutes of common planning time to support teachers and student learning.

As per the State of Connecticut, the school has implemented a school climate plan that addresses bullying and does not tolerate negative behavior. The principal of the school promotes kindness, caring, and love amongst the staff and the community. The principal makes a concerted effort to greet all parents and students daily. The parents, community, and substitutes often comment on the school being a safe and friendly place to learn and work. The principal makes sure the student is always first. She encourages the staff to get to know the students' family and their backgrounds to give the teachers a better perspective of the student and their needs. This provides a clear vision and mission for the school. A strong school culture to drive student achievement is a high priority of the principal. The school's Title 1 funds are used to provide additional human capital to support students and staff to promote student success.

The school leadership team stakeholders consist of a teacher from each grade level, the Multi as a Second Language Learner teacher, special education teachers, a social worker, a school psychologist, and a content area specialist. The team meets monthly to review the data and set goals to help the student thrive academically and socially. The team meets weekly to discuss students that participate in Standards Based-Research Interventions (SRBI) to brainstorm strategies the teachers would implement for a certain period of time to indicate the growth or non-growth of students in the classroom setting.

Great Plain Elementary School's principal meets with the parents and or guardians to inform them of the strategies used to help their child succeed. The principal solicited input from parents about the child to help them grow academically, socially, and emotionally. Various platforms are used to communicate with non-English speaking parents. During the pandemic, the principal incorporated a mitigation plan to keep the staff and students safe during COVID.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Great Plain Elementary School serves a culturally diverse population. We pride ourselves on building positive relationships and serving our school community. We serve the homeless, a large Multi-Language Learner population, as well as the general population. We use a variety of communication devices and applications to communicate with our families. We use School Messenger, Remind App., and written memos in various languages. The district provides interpreters for planning and placement and PTO meetings. This is necessary to ensure our community members are connected with the school. The Multi-Language Learner parents are invited to curriculum nights, Parent University, Open House, and cultural activities.

The media specials, social workers, and homeroom teachers make a concerted effort to purchase books and materials that reflect the population we serve. The Multi-Language Learner teacher collaborates with the general education staff to ensure the curriculum is culturally relative to the population they teach. As a result of the work and commitment of the community and staff, the students are performing and making academic growth above and beyond the targeted goals set by the school, district, and state.

Our school community's diverse needs are also met by observing heritage months in the classrooms and class field trips. For example, during the school year, we discuss and celebrate Hispanic, Italian, Asian, Black History, Indigenous, Presidents, and Women History. Students are given the opportunity to do research, discuss the significant contributions made by individuals, and present the information to the class and school to assist with public speaking.

Great Plain Elementary School partners with the local branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW). This organization presents an annual science award to a fifth-grade female student who

has shown promise in the field of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). A representative from the organization presents a plaque and medallion to the young lady during the awards ceremony that is held in June of each year.

The school team participated in Implicit Bias and Restorative Practices professional development to enhance cultural awareness and biases we have as educators. During the workshops, the staff reflected with an honest and open conversation about race, equality, and cultural/social awareness. This was an important topic to discuss due to the diverse backgrounds within the school. The school will continue the work in the future.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The greatest strategy leveraged at Great Plain Elementary School was the building of trust and the relationships needed to create a high-performance team that functioned well in a no-excuses environment. For staff to really dig into the work and feel compelled to change practice, they had to first believe their students were capable, and they had to trust the principal to lead them in the right direction. Once this was established, it cleared the way for deeper levels of continuous improvement within the school. As a result, we spent time building our collective assessment literacy, reviewing data, and making decisions about standards-based instruction that were personalized for each student. These conversations focused on student assets and building academic foundations for future growth. To support meaningful student-focused dialogue, we engaged in vertical alignment meetings and structured individual comprehensive learning plans using historical data, current observations, and our assessments of student growth and understanding of student motivation. Further, we organized creatively for both acceleration and gap closing growth by creating flexible learning groups that were based on similar individual needs and trends, meeting every four to six weeks to monitor progress and make decisions so the needs of all students could be addressed.

Further, grade level meetings were implemented to discuss the progress of all students, coupled with parents' invitations to our school every six weeks so they could be apprised of student progress. Moreover, we equipped our parents with knowledge, vocabulary, and opportunities to discuss standards and assessments on behalf of their child, recognizing the parent as the child's most influential teacher. On certain weeks, game nights were implemented that focused on academic areas and reinforced skills we wanted our students to practice. To support our efforts, staff and PTO worked collaboratively to purchase materials that were aligned to our student needs and that provided for independent practice at home.

Lastly, there was a concerted effort to work with parents, students, and staff on the impact of social-emotional learning, culturally responsive instruction and learning, as well as the education of the whole child. This was especially critical in any given year, but even more so due to the pandemic. As a school community at Great Plain, we believe that academic achievement is only one component of education and that positive relationships are key to a successful school experience.