

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

Official School Name Whiting Lane School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 47 Whiting Lane
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City West Hartford State CT Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 06119-1642

County Hartford County

Telephone (860) 233-8541 Fax _____

Web site/URL https://whitinglane.whps.org E-mail Karen_Kukish@whps.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Andrew Morrow E-mail Andrew_Morrow@whps.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name West Hartford School District Tel. (860) 561-6600

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Dr. Lorna Thomas-Farquharson
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date _____

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

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

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The 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):
- 11 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 3 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 16 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	72	53	125
K	34	23	57
1	28	30	58
2	24	20	44
3	21	20	41
4	28	26	54
5	24	22	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
Total Students	231	194	425

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 16 % Asian
 - 12 % Black or African American
 - 20 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 51 % White
 - 0 % 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: 7%

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	20
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	11
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	31
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	420
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

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

Amharic, Arabic, Dari, Dutch, Hindi, Indonesian, Kannada, Korean, Lao, Mandarin, Nepali, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Sinhala, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Tamil, Thai, Tibetan, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 32 %

Total number students who qualify: 137

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 38 %
160 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>18</u> Autism | <u>5</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>24</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>56</u> Developmental Delay | <u>8</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>48</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</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: 10
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.	21
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	27
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	58
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	13

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	96%	96%	94%	94%	95%
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.

The mission of Whiting Lane School, as a diverse community enriched by the Early Learning Center and special needs programs, is to ensure that all students acquire the academic, physical, social, and emotional foundations necessary to become respectful, responsible citizens and lifelong learners. While forging a strong home, school, and community collaboration, we will promote academic excellence, build critical thinking skills, inspire creativity, and value the unique potential of every child.

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

Mission of the West Hartford Public Schools:

To inspire and prepare all students to realize their potential and enhance our global community.

Equity and Anti-Racism Vision. We, the members of the WHPS, dedicate ourselves to the pursuit of equity. Equitable schools are those that value and honor ALL in our community as unique individuals capable of maximizing their true potential. We make a solemn promise to identify and dismantle all elements of systemic racism and historical inequities. We vow to clear paths, with a relentless duty to those in traditionally marginalized groups. We pledge to partner with ALL families in the service of the success of each child. -- Adopted 2020

Every student in the West Hartford Public Schools (WHPS) has the right to access opportunities and educational programs or activities that cultivate their unique gifts, talents, and interests, regardless of race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, alienage, ancestry, disability, gender identity or expression, or any other basis protected by State or Federal law. Every student has the right to an authentic feeling of belonging and safety. We acknowledge that current and historical systems of racism, privilege, and oppression impede student progress. Therefore, it is our moral imperative and statutory charge to identify and eliminate barriers and inequitable practices that perpetuate disparities across student groups. As an anti-racist organization, it is our collective responsibility to ensure full, safe, and equitable participation for all students, in every area of our educational programs. As a Board of Education, we have a statutory duty to implement the State’s educational interest, which includes the duty to reduce racial, ethnic, and

economic isolation of our students. We strive to reach these goals in the following ways:

Recruitment and Retention

WHPS will utilize innovative approaches and strive to recruit and retain high qualified, certified staff across all areas and leadership levels who reflect the diversity of our community and share our commitment to antiracism and anti-bias. Deliberate investment strategies will be vital to recruit, support, and retain educators and support staff, especially those from underrepresented racial, ethnic, gender, and linguistic backgrounds.

Environment/Climate

WHPS will strive to ensure that students, staff, and families are valued, respected, and heard. We recognize the ongoing need for antibias education to support the healthy development of each of our students. Discrimination, bias, or harassment toward any individual or group will not be tolerated, and we commit to our work in this area. We will encourage all members of the school community to develop a feeling of individual ownership of this responsibility to ensure safe and nurturing learning environments.

Adopted By the Board of Education: June 1, 2021

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

The mission of Whiting Lane School, as a diverse community enriched by the Early Learning Center and special needs programs, is to ensure that all students acquire the academic, physical, social, and emotional foundations necessary to become respectful, responsible citizens and lifelong learners. While forging a strong home, school and community collaboration, we will promote academic excellence, build critical thinking skills, inspire creativity, and value the unique potential of every child. Our school mission is under the umbrella of our district’s larger mission, which is: “Clear Paths. Bright Futures. No Limits.” This simple yet profound message can be interpreted in this way: We work tirelessly to clear paths for our students so that we can ensure that everyone has a bright future with no limits.

Our school goals and priorities are identified through a synthesis of input from the faculty and staff, as well as from the professional literature and research on best practices PreK-5 and curriculum, instruction and assessment. These priorities are driven by careful data analysis of student growth and performance over time. They are developed to promote the achievement of the school’s mission, core values, and goals, and to help guide and facilitate teacher professional learning objectives. Most importantly, we work collaboratively to support each elementary school learner in realizing his or her potential through high expectations, appropriate academic and social support, a rigorous and relevant curriculum, and dynamic teaching.

Our mission statement provides a foundational set of beliefs and core principles on which the Whiting Lane community builds a culture of belonging that supports every member’s capacity to live this mission daily and achieve its goals over time. We continually seek to develop an educational program conducive to meeting the needs of all students. Of particular note is the fact that this is accomplished within a building that includes two formidable district programs: the townwide Early Learning Center preschool and the K-5 intensive academic program for students with special needs - i.e. diagnosed with autism, as well as severe language and developmental delays, significant sensory integration disabilities, etc. Along with its general education population, Whiting Lane School and the Early Learning Center serve a special student constituency with distinctive learning needs. The daily functioning of the school holds challenges which require targeted attention, focused decision-making, and the ability to adapt to physical, emotional and instructional demands that are not the norm in most elementary school environments. From the earliest of their academic and social/emotional encounters on through their transition into middle school, all Whiting Lane students dwell within an inclusive environment that adds an unparalleled level of experience with intensifying open-mindedness for the concept of diversity. The special needs and special education staff work cohesively and collaboratively with regular education teachers and other support staff to ensure that the diverse needs of all students are met both within and outside of the classroom. One of the most salient characteristics of the Whiting Lane community is the sense of “family” that pervades its environment and the level of acceptance that exists as a matter of course. Practices and policies act as catalysts for students to be more empathetic to their peers and a school spirit where being fair matters more than being first is continually generated.

The Whiting Lane School Code states that “Whiting Lane citizens are respectful and responsible, make good choices, and we always take care of each other.” It forms a foundational philosophy that promotes a culture of caring among faculty, staff and students. As a community we recognize that the nature of educating children is a dynamic process and constantly evolving. As such, ongoing flexibility by all community members is essential to the collaborative efforts we must undertake to meet our goals.

Whiting Lane Elementary School is comprised of a rich, robust, and diverse community of learners in grades PreK through five. Our learning environment thrives on high instructional standards for academics, as well as social and emotional learning. At Whiting Lane our school code embodies our feeling of togetherness and camaraderie that permeates our building. We recite it together as a school each morning, and more importantly, we live it each and every day. We consistently promote character education and positive character traits within our students, which is embedded in our daily SEL (Social-Emotional Learning) comprehensive curriculum, which is delivered and taught during our morning meeting time block each day. Our faculty and staff members work diligently on a daily basis to both recognize and close our

existing achievement gaps within the building. We believe strongly that ALL students can learn and achieve at the highest of levels, and we set our bar and our expectations for student growth high. We greet and recognize each child every day, with the message of, “You are important, you matter.” Every child is seen and heard. We are fully aware that every child is unique and has a limitless potential - we work to instill self confidence and a strong sense of self in our students, eliciting their internal or intrinsic desire and drive to learn. Our students believe in themselves and trust that their teachers in turn believe in them. As a result they have cultivated an internal motivation to learn and excel.

We have a wonderful partnership with our families at Whiting Lane, and a strong and highly involved PTO (Parent-Teacher Organization). Our population is widely diverse in terms of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, as well as socio-economic status. We have students living at or below the poverty line sitting in a classroom next to students who reside in million dollar homes. Our families consistently come together to help support each other through food and clothing drives, school supply donations, book donations, and general assistance with technology support, language barriers, and overall checks of well being.

We are proud of our connection and partnership with our families. We have established our Cultural Ambassador Program, which invites family members to come in and read books to our students in their native language, with the same text then being read in English. Family members and students have the opportunity to share their customs and traditions of their cultural background, and this is a wonderful way for our students to shine and truly feel a sense of belonging. We have several projects that are always ongoing throughout the year, including the planting of gardens, various fundraisers, evening events and activities to promote togetherness and a love of reading/literacy (i.e. Reading Under the Stars, book fairs, etc), Cultural Celebrations, Autism Awareness events, World Down Syndrome Day acknowledgement, Welcoming Schools, etc.

In addition to our cultural diversity, Whiting Lane is identified as a Title I School, and we are also an intensive academic school within our district of West Hartford. We have a town-wide program for students with special needs in our PreK, which is called the ELC, or Early Learning Center. Students with disabilities or developmental delays are partnered with typical peers in a classroom that promotes inclusion and an awareness of and acceptance of differences. As those students progress throughout the grade levels we have a comprehensive special education program that meets all of their individual needs.

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:

The West Hartford Public Schools curriculum comes alive in the hands of our talented teachers at Whiting Lane School who are committed to ensuring that our students reach their highest potential. We are dedicated to accommodating children’s diverse needs, the way they learn, their experiences and interests, and to facilitating continuous educational growth. We work collaboratively together to create a respectful climate of academic success for all and to cultivate a joy for lifelong learning. In efforts to create a culturally responsive student-centered instructional practice, we have identified eight key instructional strategies to support all students to maximize their learning and to develop the habits of mind that lead to success. These 8 instructional strategies include: Establish Goals to Focus Learning; Promote Reasoning and Problem Solving; Use and Connect a Variety of Representations; Facilitate Meaningful Discourse; Pose Purposeful Questions; Build Fluency From Conceptual Understanding; Support Productive Struggle; and Elicit and Use Evidence of Student Thinking.

We have an established tiered instructional support process at our school, based on the SRBI model (Scientific Research Based Interventions). Students who fall below benchmarks are supported academically according to their individual and specific needs. It is a fluid process and academic growth and progress is consistently monitored. Our tiered interventionists work in alignment with our classroom teachers and they meet to collaborate on a regular basis. Our SST (Student Support Team) meets regularly to discuss student progress and growth, as well as any needs or additional interventions that can or should be implemented. Our teachers are highly skilled at differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all students - those learners who may be struggling with particular grade level skills and concepts, as well as those who are performing above and beyond grade level expectations. We utilize formative and summative assessments throughout the school year, and carefully analyze student data to inform and improve our instructional practices.

Our shared vision for student growth and development throughout West Hartford Public Schools and at Whiting Lane School in particular states unequivocally that students will demonstrate integrity and honor and a healthy respect for oneself and others. Through participation in rigorous programming, they will develop curiosity and a love of learning as well as perseverance and self-direction. Through a broad range of curricular and extracurricular experiences, students will learn and demonstrate effective communication and collaboration; pose substantive questions and engage in meaningful inquiry; think critically and problem solve; and become creative and innovative thinkers.

Whiting Lane School embraces this set of core values in the following ways: establishing and maintaining high academic standards, providing a welcoming and safe environment, promoting collaboration, embracing diversity, encouraging intellectual risk-taking, partnering with parents and the community, demonstrating cultural competence, and making all decisions in the best interest of students. Our specific school goals and focus areas for the 2021-22 year are concentrated on: our three key instructional strategies (i.e. establishing goals to focus learning, facilitating meaningful classroom discourse, and elicit and use evidence of student thinking); our tier one instructional approaches to increase student growth at all levels and to differentiate instruction and assessment methods to meet the needs of all learners and reduce our achievement gap; culturally responsive teaching methods where we strive to establish equity and eliminate barriers for all students; development of our social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and social justice anti-bias efforts; and our Welcoming School initiative with an emphasis on parent/family engagement and outreach.

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

The Connecticut Core Standards are K-12 academic standards in Mathematics and English language arts/literacy adopted by the CT State Board of Education and by states across the country in 2010. The core standards of our curriculum include establishing what students should understand, know, and be able to do

as they progress through grades K-12. Curriculum units based on these standards will be implemented in both mathematics and English-language arts in grades K-5 this year. For more information, please see this link: www.corestandards.org

By the time students complete grade five they will be able to develop his or her understanding and mastery of Connecticut Core Standards in English-Language Arts. These standards integrate all aspects of Language Arts development and are categorized under Reading, Writing, Speaking & Listening, and Language. We use a wide variety of instructional strategies and formats to help our children learn these standards by the end of their elementary school experience. These strategies include: identifying similarities and differences, summarizing and note-taking, reinforcing effort and providing recognition, independent practice of the skills, nonlinguistic representations, cooperative learning, setting objectives and providing feedback, generating and testing hypotheses, and questions, cues and advance organizers. (*Marzano) Assessment methods are critical to student growth and learning and inform both teachers and families of a child's progress in school. Assessments have specific purposes, and we utilize the following types of assessments on a regular basis with our students: formative, summative, diagnostic, and informal assessment tools. Formative assessments are ongoing throughout the school year and help our teachers to make sound instructional decisions based on current learning levels of all students. Formative assessments can be homework assignments, classwork assignments, teacher observations, oral or written reports, quizzes, etc. Summative assessments are more formal and typically occur at the end of a unit of study, revealing a child's overall knowledge and skill acquisition in a particular subject area. Summative assessments may occur in the form of a test or a final presentation or project. Diagnostic tests or assessments are administered at regular intervals throughout the school year and can determine a child's proficiency of specific skills, particularly in reading and mathematics. For example: letter naming and sounds, reading comprehension, reading rate and fluency, math computation, math concepts and applications knowledge, etc. Diagnostic tests are also used as screening tools for additional academic support as part of our tiered SRBI process. Informal assessment tools are not standardized and can be as simple as a checklist or a thumbs up or down to indicated a student's level of self understanding. Within our curriculum we include Assured Learning Experiences (ALEs) for every child. These are common experiences that students engage in to demonstrate their progress in attaining the learning standards identified in a unit of study. Rubrics are developed and used to assess student work.

In the area of Reading we focus on applying phonics and word recognition skills at each grade level, as well as word analysis skills in decoding words. Students use their knowledge of letter-sound correspondence, syllabication patterns, and morphology (e.g., roots and affixes) to accurately read unfamiliar multisyllabic words. Our goal is for all students to read on grade level text with the appropriate accuracy and fluency to support comprehension of the text. Students will identify key Ideas and details in a text and quote accurately from a text when drawing inferences and explaining what the text says explicitly. Students will also determine a theme from details in the text including how characters respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic. Within our instruction we focus on comparing and contrasting how characters interact, drawing on specific details. Students determine two or more main ideas of a text and supporting key details, and demonstrate the ability to summarize the text and explain the relationships or interactions between individuals, events, etc. Emphasis is also placed on understanding the structure of texts by explaining how chapters, scenes or stanza fit together to provide structure of a story, drama or poem. In addition, students are taught to identify and describe how the narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described and to determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. Students compare and contrast the overall structure of events, ideas, and information in texts, and analyze multiple accounts of the same event noting similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.

In order to integrate knowledge and ideas within and across texts students analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning or tone of a text, and compare and contrast stories in the same genre on their approaches to similar themes and topics. Students draw on information from multiple print or digital sources to locate an answer or solve a problem quickly and efficiently and explain how an author uses evidence to support particular points in a text. As part of a summative assessment, an end goal is for students to successfully integrate information from several texts on the same topic and write or speak about the subject knowledgeably. We teach our students to read and comprehend a range of literature with

appropriate grade level complexity, and to independently and proficiently comprehend a variety of texts at the grade level complexity range. We teach our students to use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading or listening, and to understand and use grade level appropriate vocabulary. Students are taught to determine and clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases using a variety of strategies and to demonstrate an understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings (e.g., similes, idioms, proverbs). Students increase their speaking and listening skills by participating in collaborative conversations with understanding. Students come to discussions prepared and explicitly draw on information known about the topic under discussion, and review key ideas and draw conclusions based on information and knowledge shared by their peers. Students are able to summarize a written text, a read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats. Students present knowledge and ideas clearly by reporting on a topic or presenting an opinion with logical sequence and descriptive details to support main ideas or themes. Students include multimedia components and visual displays when appropriate, and adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks.

Teachers use the Writers' Workshop model to plan narrative, information, and opinion writing units. Each writing block includes a short mini-lesson focusing on the writing process, writing conventions, and/or craft. Students then work on assigned or self-selected writing pieces as teachers confer with students either individually or in small groups. The workshop lesson closes with sharing time during which students celebrate and reflect on their writing and the writing process.

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

Our mathematics curriculum is based on the Connecticut Core Standards for Mathematics (CCSS-M) that define what students should understand and be able to do by the end of the year at each grade level. The Connecticut Core Standards for Mathematics have two key components: 1. Standards for Mathematical Practice – eight practices in which students engage at all grade levels; and 2. Standards for Mathematical Content – conceptual understandings and procedural knowledge and skills that build vertically throughout a child's elementary educational experience.

The Content Standards at each grade level are grouped into domains (e.g. Geometry) and clusters within each domain. For example, our instructional focus in Grade 5 (culminating year of a child's elementary experience) is on three critical areas: (1) developing fluency with addition and subtraction of fractions, developing understanding of the multiplication of fractions, and of division of fractions with unit fractions and whole numbers (2) extending division to two-digit divisors, developing understanding of operations with decimals to hundredths, and developing fluency with whole number and decimal operations; (3) developing understanding of volume. The domains and clusters of standards for Grade 5 are highlighted below. A comprehensive description of the Connecticut Core Standards for Mathematics that we are closely aligned with is available at <http://www.corestandards.org/> We focus on inquiry-based learning in mathematics, encouraging our students to demonstrate their understanding through the use of manipulatives, tools, and various technology applications. We aim to reach mastery in both procedural applications and overall conceptual understanding. Students apply their knowledge in mathematics to other disciplines, as well as to real world applications through problem solving and various collaborative group projects.

Our core mathematical practices are focused on several different skills and key concepts, and our instructional strategies are varied and differentiated based on the individual needs of each child as a learner. They include: make sense of problems and persevere in solving them; reason abstractly and quantitatively; construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others; model with mathematics; use appropriate tools strategically; attend to precision; look for and make use of structure; and look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning. Students focus on key fluency strategies (i.e. multiply multi-digit whole numbers using the standard algorithm), as well as operations and algebraic thinking, which involves writing and interpreting numerical expressions, as well as analyzing various patterns and relationships. We emphasize number sense and operations in base ten, i.e. understanding the place value system, as well as performing operations with multi-digit whole numbers and with decimals to hundredths, etc. Students do extensive work with fractions, including using equivalent fractions as a strategy to add and subtract fractions, as well as applying and extending previous understandings of multiplication and division in order to multiply and divide fractions accurately. Our math units also emphasize measurement and data, which

includes converting like measurement units within a given measurement system, representing and interpreting data in multiple forms, and geometric measurement in terms of understanding concepts of volume and relating volume to multiplication and addition computation skills. Students engage in graphing points on the coordinate plane to solve real-world and mathematical problems, as well as classifying two-dimensional figures into categories based on their properties.

As in the case with all subject areas, assessment methods are critical to student growth and learning and inform both teachers and families of a child's progress in school. Assessments have specific purposes in mathematics, and we utilize the following types of assessments on a regular basis with our students: formative, summative, diagnostic, and informal assessment tools. Formative assessments are ongoing throughout the school year and help our teachers to make sound instructional decisions based on current mathematics learning levels of all students. Formative assessments can be homework assignments, classwork assignments, teacher observations, oral or written reports, math quizzes, etc. Summative assessments are more formal and typically occur at the end of a unit of study, revealing a child's overall knowledge and skill acquisition in a particular area of mathematics. Summative assessments may occur in the form of a test or a final presentation or project. Diagnostic tests or assessments are administered at regular intervals throughout the school year and can determine a child's proficiency of specific skills, for example: math computation, math concepts and applications knowledge, fluency, etc. Diagnostic tests are also used as screening tools for additional academic support as part of our tiered SRBI process. Informal assessment tools are not standardized and can be as simple as a checklist or a thumbs up or down to indicate a student's level of self understanding. Within our math curriculum we include Assured Learning Experiences (ALEs) for every child. These are common experiences that students engage in to demonstrate their progress in attaining the learning standards identified in a unit of study. Rubrics are developed and used to assess student work.

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

Our comprehensive and newly re-designed Science curriculum is based on the K-12 Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) passed by the CT State Board of Education in November, 2015. This standards-based framework emphasizes learning experiences that provide students with the skills and knowledge they need to be well-informed citizens, to be prepared for college and careers, and to understand and appreciate the essential role of science in our community and our world.

By the end of their elementary school experience, students develop an understanding of matter and its conservation through experimentation and create models to demonstrate their knowledge. They are able to interpret data about the distribution of water on Earth as well as describe ways in which the geosphere, biosphere, hydrosphere and/or atmosphere interact. Fifth grade students also identify the movement of matter and energy transfer among plants, animals, decomposers and the environment. Students are able to understand the patterns of daily changes in length and direction of shadows, day and night, and the seasonal appearance of some stars in the night sky. Students engage in ongoing data collection and data analysis, drawing conclusions and making predictions. Students ask inquiry-based questions and delve into experiments and trials with enthusiasm and excitement within a challenging and rigorous classroom environment.

To demonstrate their understanding of the core ideas indicated above, students engage (and are assessed) in the following science and engineering practices: asking questions and defining problems; developing and using models; planning and carrying out investigations; analyzing and interpreting data; using mathematics and computational thinking; constructing explanations and designing solutions; engaging in arguments from evidence; and obtaining, evaluating and communicating information. Students demonstrate their learning and are assessed in a variety of ways, including formative, summative, and informal methods. Written unit tests are administered as a culminating test or measure of students' scientific knowledge, as well as ongoing formative quizzes/questions to determine growth and achievement. Students engage in multiple science investigative projects, in both small and large scale formats. Students are afforded multiple opportunities to engage in peer and self assessment based on carefully designed rubrics.

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

The Social Studies curriculum was developed with guidance from the Connecticut Social Studies Framework passed by the State Board of Education in February 2015. This Connecticut framework provides a foundation for teaching history, civics and government, geography, and economics in all grade levels. Our civics program encapsulates several different content and skill areas of focus, including: determine the purpose for rules and laws; develop an understanding of rules and responsibilities within communities; understand the foundations of government and the difference between state, local, and national government; and engage in discussions of how religion has shaped the development of the original thirteen colonies. Our geography program covers numerous areas as well, including: exploring maps and their purpose; identifying where one lives and locate important places on current and historical maps; using maps to identify important information using symbols, legends, and keys; giving and following directions; and creating a variety of maps.

In addition, as part of the English/Language Arts and Writing units, fifth graders will participate in a study of exploration and colonization. Students first consider the question, “What impact did the early explorers have on shaping the development of the New World?” Students then study the thirteen original colonies in an effort to answer the question, “In what ways, and for whom, was America a land of opportunity during the colonial period?” Students determine the similarities and differences among the early American colonies through the study of a variety of primary and secondary sources and electronic media.

As with all other academic areas, there are multiple ways that students are assessed on their social studies content and knowledge - via both ongoing formative and summative assessments, as well as informal daily classroom assessment methods. For example, students may be asked to read a section of historical text and/or an opinion or factual writing piece and analyze the information contained within or compare and contrast with another primary or secondary source of information. Students create maps and representations of geographic regions and sites, as well as multimedia projects or websites to demonstrate knowledge and mastery of particular social studies skills. Students regularly present their work to their classmates, via a formal presentation or a creative display.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

The Early Learning Center (ELC) is a comprehensive National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredited public preschool program located within Whiting Lane Elementary School. It is designed to meet the needs of West Hartford children between the ages of three and five years old identified with speech and language, developmental, social, behavioral or academic delays. Students with special education needs are referred to the ELC from several sources: parents, community based pre-schools, the State of Connecticut Birth-to-Three Program, teachers, public and private agencies and pediatricians. Our ELC program implements the Creative Curriculum for Preschool. This curriculum is a play-based approach grounded in research and early childhood theory. Teachers plan for and assess your children’s development using the companion assessment tool called Teaching Strategies GOLD. The ELC is an inclusive program, with approximately 50% students identified with special needs and 50% typically developing peer models per classroom. Children with special needs are determined eligible through the Special Education Planning and Placement Team (PPT) process. Children exhibiting age appropriate development can be considered for the program as Peer Playmates. These children are selected by a screening and lottery process and pay tuition upon entering the program. All teachers at the Early Learning Center are dual certified in early childhood education and special education.

Teachers plan curriculum with learning goals based on each individual child. We use the Creative Curriculum for Preschool® and Teaching Strategies GOLD® for planning learning experiences, observing and documenting child progress, and implementing instructional strategies. These tools are designed to assure that children develop the skills needed for a successful transition to kindergarten. Children are assessed throughout the year using the authentic assessment protocol provided within these tools. These assessments are then used to help guide teachers in planning experiences. In addition to their advanced

degrees in teaching, learning and assessment, certified teachers receive specialized training in using these assessment tools. The Creative Curriculum and Teaching Strategies GOLD are aligned with the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards. (J1)

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The Visual Arts curriculum provides a sequential and meaningful focus on skills and concepts while emphasizing art production, art history, aesthetics, and art criticism. Instruction and student learning are driven by the National Core Arts Standards (2015) and corresponding anchor standards of Creating, Presenting, Responding and Connecting. These standards foster development of Visual Arts literacy, inquiry skills, 21st century and life skills. Our students have art class twice a week. We offer a modified art class for our students with special needs.

A quality education in the Visual Arts and Musical Arts programs provides our students with the means to value art and music as an important realm of human activity, and a lifelong source of insight and understanding. In addition, it offers self-reflective opportunities focusing on expression and development of personal style and provides opportunities for students to develop interpersonal skills through collaborative work. Our arts program enhances critical and creative thinking abilities as well as problem solving skills, and fosters the development of 21st century skills. Our students attend music class twice per week, and we offer a modified music class for our students with special needs. We have a choir and a band/orchestra program (performance groups) offered to students in grades four and five.

The Arts and Music Department promotes artistic development, fosters development of visual literacy, a love of music and dance, critical thinking skills, intellectual risk-taking and lifelong learning. While the foundation for the curriculum is based on the (1994) National Standards, the (2015) National Core Arts Standards (NCAS) provide an update on expectations for the 21st century learner. Instructional strategies and standards are focused on inquiry, exploration and development of skill and technique through student-centered experiences that promote meaningful discourse.

Our students have physical education class twice per week. We also have a modified PE class for our students with special needs. The following are our Physical Education Focus Areas: Body Management - students execute locomotor movements (e.g. run, skip, jump), non-locomotor skills (e.g. twist, rock, balance), and various combinations of these skills. These are colored with the elements of space (e.g. direction, level), effort (e.g. speed, force), and relationship (e.g. mirror, match). In the upper elementary grades basic movement skills and concepts are refined into traditional sport skills (e.g. high jump in track, dribbling in soccer); Manipulative Skills - students execute a variety of skills that show dexterity and coordination by handling small and large equipment, such as balls, hoops, ropes, paddles, and wands. Examples of manipulative skills include throwing, catching, striking, volleying, and dribbling; Dance - an opportunity for students to use functional movement skills in expressive ways. We emphasize two types of dance at the elementary level - creative and cultural. Creative dance stretches students to express ideas, feelings, stories, and ideas through movement. Cultural dance allows students to experience the richness of various parts of the world as reflected in music, rhythm, and movement. Folk dances from various countries, including American square, are included in cultural dance; Physical Fitness - students gain an understanding of the major components of fitness through activity. The major components of fitness include flexibility, muscular strength, muscular endurance, and cardiovascular endurance. Individual improvement is emphasized through goal setting. Lastly, we focus on Adventure/Cooperative Education - students practice team building, problem solving, communication skills, and cooperation through group activities. These experiences are often integrated into the other activity units.

Our elementary World Language Program is designed to enhance students' communicative skills, while fostering knowledge and understanding of other cultures and disciplines. We teach Spanish to students in grades three through five. During this three-year time frame, our students learn the fundamentals of second language learning through an array of topics and themes that include, among others, greetings, calendar, likes and dislikes, weather, animals, body parts, school-related vocabulary, clothing, numbers, time, family, sports and pastimes, travel and holidays. Although the knowledge and skills acquired during the first year of our program are very basic in nature, the level of difficulty and depth progresses within the subsequent two

years. Through a spiral curriculum, students learn, recycle and expand knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical structures from year to year. At the same time, they develop four fundamental communicative skills in the second language. These skills are listening, speaking, reading and writing.

An essential part of teaching and learning a language is being able to measure how well students are acquiring those communicative skills. For that purpose, there are a number of age-appropriate assessments that are implemented throughout the year and the year's end. These assessments, which vary from grade to grade, include all types of speaking, listening, writing and reading activities, including student-to-student dialogues, teacher-student questions and answers, skits, charades, projects, worksheets, songs and rhymes, games, quizzes, and presentations.

Our elementary World Language program not only helps our students' communicative skills in a second language, but it also helps them understand and respect the multiple cultures and languages that exist within our West Hartford community and worldwide. Furthermore, it helps them reinforce the language of other subject areas. Last but not least, it provides a solid foundation for future learning.

Our library media center is the learning hub of our school. Our students attend library once per week for one hour at designated scheduled times. Library media specialists are student-centered instructional collaborators, and literacy and technological leaders. The essential mission of school libraries is to inspire and prepare students to be independent knowledge seekers, critical thinkers, creative problem-solvers, and lifelong learners. We create spaces that are welcoming and inclusive. Because the pace of information growth and technology advances exponentially, we help students actively develop a flexible set of skills and mindset to adapt and contribute to the ever-changing nature of our world. Our library media program seeks to support library media specialists who remain on the forefront of literacy and educational technology and to foster in our students a lifelong passion for reading for pleasure as well as for information. We create opportunities and flexible spaces to foster student curiosity and creativity. We create planned and integrated opportunities for professional collaboration between the library media specialist and classroom teachers. In addition, we promote inquiry as the key to developing authentic knowledge and skills. This involves teaching students how to locate, evaluate, synthesize and communicate information. We teach our students the ethical use of information and technology and nurture the habits of mind that allow students to take ownership of their learning and pursue their passions. We provide opportunities for students to honor, develop, and explore their identities through engagement with texts and resources that reflect themselves and others.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

As readers, students may begin struggling along the PK-12 continuum for a variety of reasons. For example: A student may sustain his/her level of reading growth and capacity until the level of text complexity and reading comprehension rigor surpass that capacity; A student's second language abilities may challenge typical growth rates of reading development; A student may arrive new in the district without having received needed instruction and interventions at his/her previous district. Our response is a flexible, tiered instructional model guided by the 2008 CT Scientifically Research Based Instruction (SRBI) mandate and led by reading specialists at each level of instruction. In 2008, the Connecticut State Department of Education adopted the term Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI), synonymous with the nationally used term Response to Intervention (RTI). Both refer to the practice of providing high-quality instruction and targeted intervention best matched to individual student needs. A collaborative team of teachers at our school, called the Student Success Team (SST), meets regularly to review student progress, recommend classroom instructional strategies, and determine needs and student goals for intervention. Per state and federal legislation, if a student is referred to the Parent and Placement Team (PPT) regarding a potential learning disability, documentation and data from the SRBI/SST process is part of the referral/identification process. Reading specialists at all levels support both students and teachers with strategies that address appropriate levels of reading development as well as literacy strategies for deeper understanding in content areas. These educators are core members of the SST team at each building and provide diagnostic screening evaluations of students as needed to determine targeted reading needs/goals.

Reading intervention teachers and tutors at the elementary level provide additional direct instruction to students with foundational literacy needs. Town-wide elementary and middle school literacy specialists engage teachers, administrators and reading colleagues in timely, responsive professional learning and support during faculty meetings, department/team meetings, SST meetings, and Wednesday CSI sessions. The Director of Elementary Education (PreK-5) and the Department Supervisor for Literacy (6-12) provide oversight to the district-wide literacy intervention program. The CT SRBI model for literacy intervention is defined by three “tiers” of instruction and learning as follows:

Tier I: Effective Instruction for All Students Central to the SRBI model is high quality Tier 1 core literacy instruction for all students in the general education classroom. Most students (80-85%) will respond to Tier I general education best practices implemented with fidelity by the classroom teacher. With ongoing assessment and responsive Tier I instruction, we strive to reduce the number of students requiring reading intervention or special education services. Reading specialists at all levels support Tier 1 instruction as teacher-leaders. They build teacher capacity to implement differentiated, comprehensive literacy strategies in the classroom to meet literacy needs of all students. Elementary Reading Specialists and the Secondary Literacy Coach provide job- embedded coaching support to classroom teachers in identifying students struggling to learn the core curriculum and those who exhibit gaps in critical skills.

Tier II: Supplemental Intervention Tier II interventions provide supplemental, focused learning opportunities for the small number of students not making adequate progress toward grade level literacy expectations with Tier I instruction (5-15%). Tiered interventions are not modifications or accommodations to the existing language arts curriculum. Tier II interventions are supplemental instruction focused on targeted literacy skills. Universal benchmark screening and other district literacy measures provide SST teams with data to identify students for intervention. Tier II interventions are provided by reading specialists in all grades as well as reading intervention teachers and tutors at the elementary level.

Tier III: Intensive Intervention Tier III interventions are designed to provide intensive interventions for students who are not making adequate progress in response to Tier I and Tier II supports (1-5%). Students in Tier III intervention receive daily targeted instruction designed to close their reading strategy/skill gaps. Frequent progress monitoring and diagnostic assessments help to determine the individualized needs of each student and their rates of achievement. Progress monitoring is regularly administered by reading specialists in Tier II and Tier III classes. This monitoring of student progress in intervention informs decisions about students’ exit from intervention services as well as department programming for instruction and assessment.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

QUEST, our Gifted and Talented Program, has been serving the needs of high-ability, creative, and motivated students since 1994. The program honors an individual student's social, emotional, and unusually advanced academic development by offering experiences for the integration of their ingenuity, consistency of encouragement, and the fostering of goals. Students gain a greater understanding of their creative minds and talents. Through the use of 21st-century skills, the curricula provide the opportunities for inquiry-based learning with a focus on personalized projects guided by the QUEST teacher. The individualized studies garner student’s access to experts and like-minded peers. QUEST teachers encourage students to demonstrate high-level practical skills and a capacity for creative thinking, which are tools that are instrumental in students realizing their innovative potential.

A student centered program, the principles and design of QUEST are envisioned on the Enrichment Triad Model (Renzulli, 1977), the School-wide Enrichment Model (Renzulli and Reis, 1985) and the cultivation of Talent Development (Baum, 2008). The structured inquiry-based curriculum and investigative research centers on the particular needs of students for optimal learning. Students participate in experiences of self-selected high interest targets for learning that enhance the cognitive engagement of the advanced learner. The program design features three types of creative inquiry: each one guiding the learner through a higher level of depth, complexity and independence. In addition, we also have a comprehensive Art Quest and Math Quest program in our building, for students who particularly excel in those areas specifically. Classroom teachers regularly differentiate instruction methods and materials to meet the needs of all students, those who are below, at, and above grade level.

3c. Special education:

Whiting Lane has a robust special education program. We are an intensive academic school, which means that intensive academic support is provided for students with significant developmental disabilities such as autism, cognitive delays, bio neurological impairments, significant speech and language disabilities, and/or multiple disabilities. Students are referred to our school for access to more focused and targeted strategies and interventions along with increased time within the special education environment. The teachers and staff in our intensive program are selected for their specialized experience and training. Related Services are integrated into the program. Instruction is delivered in both the general education classroom with support and/or in the Learning Center classroom. Students attending our school and accessing the intensive academic support program may live in our school's neighborhood or may live in a non-program school neighborhood.

Special Education is a service, not a placement. Services include specially designed instruction and any additional related services that a child may need. Specially designed instruction is provided as determined by the student's education plan (IEP) and is based on an individualized evaluation of the student's disability and needs. Related services support the educational program and are determined by the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) and specified in the student's Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). Related services include: Psychological, Speech and Language, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Health, Social Work, Hearing Impaired, Autism Consultation, Behavioral Consultation, Assistive Technology Consultation, Vocational/Transition and/or Transportation. Services may be delivered in the general education classroom or in the related services room.

The delivery of Special Education Services is driven by the individual needs of the student, the requirements of the Federal and State mandates (IDEA) and the availability of resources within our school. The referral for special education services requires data on the student's response to instruction and intervention in general education, (i.e. differentiated instruction, accommodations, strategies, reading specialist/tutor, early intervention, student assistance team recommendations, etc). In addition to examining the student's performance on curriculum based assessments, a psycho-educational evaluation is completed. Upon review of the data the PPT determines eligibility for a disability and the need for special education services and an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) is developed to meet the unique needs of the student. The student's needs on the IEP determine services and educational placement. The development of the student IEP and the delivery of services are done in collaboration with the general education teacher, parents, related service providers and implemented within the Least Restrictive Environment. The district utilizes a web-based IEP program (IEP Direct) to correlate with the general education grade level curriculum.

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

Whiting Lane is very proud of our ESOL population! We have a very diverse population of students who represent several different backgrounds and cultures. We celebrate diversity in all of its forms, and we are honored to represent so many different countries from around the world. We hold Cultural Celebrations within our community, and we also have developed a Cultural Ambassador program where families are invited into the school to read a book to the students in their native language, with the same text being read to them in English. Students engage in discussion and dialogue about the language and culture, and make connections and comparisons between the two.

ESOL services support English Language Learners in our schools. ELLs speak another language besides English in their homes. Our program's goal is to develop the language skills that are necessary for students to achieve academic success in the mainstream classroom. We have an early identification process which involves a meeting/interview with both the student and the family to determine levels of individual need and establish a positive relationship based on mutual trust and respect. The ESOL curriculum is designed to develop language skills such as vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading and writing through thematic units that are aligned with grade-level Common Core Standards. Groups are formed and scheduled based on grade level and students' individual language proficiency and needs. Student growth is carefully tracked and assessed over time to inform our instructional practices.

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

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Student engagement is critical to learning, particularly now in light of our recent health pandemic. Students need to feel safe and connected - to themselves, their peers, their teachers, and also to the curricular content that is being taught in the classroom. We have a strong social emotional learning component (SEL) that is incorporated daily during our morning meeting time, as well as throughout the entire school day. SEL is defined in Connecticut as: The process through which children and adults achieve emotional intelligence through competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Public Act 19-166).

We have a comprehensive curriculum (Second Step) devoted to student academic, social and emotional growth and development, and it is based on CASEL's (The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) process of developing five sets of core competencies, in the context of safe, caring, well-managed, academically rigorous, and engaging learning environments. We regularly monitor and assess student growth throughout the year based on these competencies, based on observations, survey results, and overall performance on school/district assessments, both formative and summative.

These competencies include:

1. Self-awareness - being able to accurately assess one's feelings, interests, values, and strengths; maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence
2. Self-management - being able to regulate one's emotions to handle stress, control impulses, and persevere in overcoming obstacles; setting and monitoring progress toward personal and academic goals; expressing emotions effectively
3. Social awareness - being able to take the perspective of and empathize with others; recognizing and appreciating individual and group similarities and differences; recognizing and using family, school, and community resources
4. Relationship skills - being able to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation; resisting inappropriate social pressure; preventing, managing and resolving interpersonal conflict; seeking help when needed
5. Responsible decision-making - being able to make decisions based on consideration of reason, ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, respect for self and others, applying decision-making skills to academic and social situations; contributing to the well-being of one's school and community

In addition to our SEL curriculum, we also maintain a school-wide behavior support program called PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports). Children are explicitly taught appropriate behaviors for each area of the school building and are recognized and rewarded for their efforts on a regular basis. The intent is for children to internalize appropriate, respectful and caring behaviors and to be intrinsically motivated towards positive choices.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Family and community engagement is critical to the success of children in school. At Whiting Lane we have carefully cultivated and fostered a highly successful home-school partnership with our families. Our families, school representatives and community stakeholders work in partnership to best improve student achievement and social emotional well-being.

At Whiting Lane and across the district we adhere closely to the five principles of family engagement, which include: Providing a welcoming school environment and reducing identified barriers; Positive

communication regarding student behavior and achievement to families; Represented through an active two-way communication utilizing a variety of mediums; Communication that allows for the identification of experiences that increase dialogue opportunities; and Opportunities for families to be involved and influence planning/policy utilizing their expertise.

Every year our faculty members identify a family engagement/communication goal in efforts towards continuous improvement of our partnership. We connect regularly with families via phone, email, meetings, parent conferences, forums, evening events, cultural celebrations, fundraisers, etc. We administer yearly surveys to parents to elicit direct and honest feedback and keep records of efforts and action steps taken. We have an active PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) who meet regularly to plan events, fundraisers, and community gatherings.

“One Community for Equity” is an integral component of our district Welcoming Schools initiative. It is comprised of a collaborative of the Office of Equity Advancement for the West Hartford Public Schools and parent-led/community stakeholder groups sharing common goals and interests leading to more equitable schools and a more equitable community. As we strive to achieve our mission, we are compelled to actively seek the perspectives of all who make WHPS such a richly diverse educational community. We have an active EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) parent group at Whiting Lane, which is a group of parent leaders connecting students, families, community members, and educators, and taking action to create a more equitable learning environment where all students can be successful. In addition, our school/district offers a PLTI (Parent Leadership Training Institute), which is a free of cost 20-week program that combines advocacy, leadership and citizenship skills into a curriculum to foster the best interests of children. Our PTC (Parent Teacher Council) is a group that meets approximately once a month during the school year to discuss matters that impact the entire school district. Each meeting generally has a primary topic, followed by an informal Q&A/discussion with the Superintendent. In addition, we have a robust and thriving SEPTO (Special Education Parent Teacher Organization), which is a district- wide PTO (Pre-K to Post Secondary Program) that focuses on special education needs and issues in West Hartford.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

“We cannot reasonably expect our schools to be rich learning environments for children if we are not willing to create the same conditions for the adults who work in them.” ~ Seymour Sarason

The Connecticut State Department of Education requires school districts, who are approved providers, to provide 18 hours of professional development annually to help meet the learning needs of teachers. In many districts this is a responsibility met simply and quickly with three 6-hour in-service dates that address current trends in teaching and learning. Traditionally, these “workshops” are in presentation mode, and teachers passively absorb what they can with little time for application. While teachers appreciate new information, they often view such presentations as disconnected from the realities of the classrooms they are anxious to organize and design for their students.

At Whiting Lane School and across West Hartford, this professional learning requirement is elevated to a level that not only provides current information, but also ensures that the learning teachers engage in will impact student achievement in their classrooms. Our efforts are not limited to three days a year, but instead are sustained throughout the year in a detailed and carefully planned CSI (Curriculum and Staff Improvement) Calendar. This blueprint carves out time for all educators to engage in professional learning at the classroom, school, department and district levels. Time is allocated for district, building and department initiatives, and for curriculum review and renewal. Two Townwide CSI Series, consisting of three Wednesday afternoons in the winter and three in the spring, allow for district wide collaboration. Teachers work with supervisors to plan programs of professional learning that are aligned with the goals of the district, school, and departments. Through collaborative inquiry, learning becomes part of the work of teaching.

Our CSI program, because it is sustained throughout the year, allows us to address and implement initiatives over the course of time rather than in a brief experience. Professional learning becomes a process, rather than an event. Teachers are able to learn something one week, try it, and come back and reflect on the

effectiveness of the strategy. Teachers are more accountable for their learning in this system because they know the topic won't disappear when the in-service is over. New programs are implemented more effectively and smoothly, as time is built in to address issues that arise in the course of implementation. More recently we have initiated our CIT (Collaborative Inquiry Teams) Groups, where teachers who have a like-minded point of view and interests are able to choose to come together and collaborate on an inquiry topic that most closely relates to their professional practice.

During our recent extended online learning experience due to the health pandemic teachers were afforded ample time and professional training on a variety of technology strategies and programs. In addition, our district created a separate RLE (Remote Learning Experience) "school" to accommodate those students and families who were not comfortable with returning to a hybrid model of in-person instruction.

In addition to professional development, we value our teachers in a multitude of ways. Teacher voices are both elicited and heard on a regular basis. Our teachers serve on our curriculum writing committees and attend training sessions where they in turn adapt a "train the trainer" model with their colleagues. Teachers are regularly rewarded for their professional efforts through a school wide praise and recognition program, and are also afforded multiple opportunities to praise and recognize each other. Staff morale in our building is high because teachers know that they are valued and their voices matter. They are a part of the decision-making and goal setting process of the school as a whole, and work collaboratively with the Principal on various committees and groups (i.e. School Safety Committee, Equity Committee, Technology Committee, School Improvement Committee, etc.) We regularly celebrate our teachers with staff outings and catered events such as luncheons and community gatherings.

4. School Leadership:

Successful leadership requires a high level of perseverance, commitment and dedication to all stakeholders within an organization. Stakeholders of Whiting Lane School include: district leadership, faculty, support staff, office staff, community members, parents, and most importantly, students. Effective leaders are not only charismatic and dynamic; they possess a deep understanding and knowledge of best practices – grounded in theory and research and focused on obtainable goals. They work tirelessly and collaboratively with others to transform their knowledge into practical solutions and daily decisions that positively impact teaching and learning. Decisions are made based on information obtained from multiple sources and focus on the "big picture", in alignment with the framework of district and school goals. Embedded within the goals are specific action steps and defined priorities which require the efforts and expertise of all involved in order to achieve fully. True leaders set an example and recognize in colleagues the qualities needed to inspire students to reach their maximum learning potential in the classroom. They build a community and sustain meaningful relationships based on mutual trust and understanding. They recognize and cultivate the growth of essential skills and talents, set high expectations and provide the support, resources and professional development needed to create a thriving school culture focused on success for all.

At Whiting Lane we have one administrator, the principal and department supervisors for various departments (i.e. special education, music, library media, physical education, art, etc); as well as a curriculum specialist and a reading specialist on site. Department supervisors have various buildings within the district to supervise and are not full time at any one school. The role of the principal is to work collaboratively and effectively with on site school leaders (i.e. curriculum specialist, reading specialist) to create an environment for students that is conducive to learning at high levels and to provide teachers with the professional development, knowledge and tools needed to continue to hone and master their craft. At Whiting Lane we work tirelessly to foster a community atmosphere of caring and respect for all individuals, with an emphasis on appreciation for and celebration of individual differences and unique skills and talents. We promote the tenets of equity and culturally responsive teaching strategies and methods to ensure that all students and staff feel safe and supported. We regularly incorporate effective teaching strategies and differentiation in the best interest of students in terms of curriculum, instruction, and assessment methods. We continue to enhance character education in our school, focusing on a variety of topics and subject matter. We have a shared responsibility for student growth and achievement through careful progress monitoring of specific interventions, strategies and techniques in the classroom. Teachers feel supported in their work, designating time for important school initiatives and promoting collegiality. Students are

supported in their work as well, as we emphasize independence and inquiry-based learning in the classroom, with high levels of engagement among both teachers and students. Lastly, we encourage teachers to model best practices for their colleagues, to learn from one another and engage in peer instruction practices to improve our collective capacity as educators.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

West Hartford Public Schools and Whiting Lane boast a rich tapestry of diversity and culture. We have students who represent various countries from all over the world and over forty languages spoken. The Equity and Diversity Council (EDC) seeks to promote equity, advance diversity, and foster inclusiveness, acceptance, mutual respect and support, civility and non-discrimination across all areas of our district and school's programs and services. The work of the EDC is aligned with the WHPS' Mission and Vision for Equity and Anti-Racism.

The EDC is a district-wide faculty and staff structure that serves to develop systemic approaches to enhancing our policies, practices, programs and the teaching and learning process. To this end, the EDC aims to ensure equitable opportunities and support for each and every student. Further, the EDC applies a real-time equity lens to closely examine Board policies and identify impact for opportunities and barriers.

At Whiting Lane we have a thriving ESOL population of students and a rich variety of cultures and backgrounds. ALL are welcome at Whiting Lane! We are proud of our inclusive efforts to engage and involve families through our Cultural Ambassador Program, our Cultural Celebrations, and our focus on diverse authors and texts that both recognize and honor diversity in all its forms.

Recently Whiting Lane implemented Racial Justice Training sessions for fourth and fifth grade students and families, as well as an in-depth professional development experience for the entire faculty. Educators, students, and staff engaged in a meaningful, interactive conversation about race and the history of racism in our country, looking carefully at defining the different realms of racism (i.e. personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional) and the impact that our own unconscious biases may have on our individual decision making processes. The Racial Justice Training used a format that included a variety of instructional strategies, including: story-telling, multimedia videos, informational handouts, identification of a common language, questioning techniques, etc. Feedback from these learning experiences suggested that the program was effective in raising awareness. Further, the Racial Justice Training sparked a journey of self-reflection and a call to action which left participants with feelings of personal empowerment and a strong sense of hope and optimism for the future. Follow-up activities within the Whiting Lane fourth and fifth grade classrooms have assisted in sustaining the momentum. The partnership that has been established between Whiting Lane faculty and staff, the PTO and Racial Justice Trainers has been instrumental in terms of moving the school community forward towards even greater levels of acceptance and inclusiveness. Overall, the Racial Justice Program at Whiting Lane has influenced a shared collective responsibility to bring light into the shadows and to unmask racism so that we can fully dismantle it.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

We employ multiple strategies as we strive for our students to fully realize their maximum potential and meet with success, academically as well as socially and emotionally. The one practice that separates itself from the rest is our high bar of expectations and excellence that our teachers set for our students and the tireless work that they do to form relationships and meaningful connections with kids. Our teachers are incredible - they embody the highest caliber of talent, skill, caring, and dedication to their students and their profession/mission.

Our school is committed to improving student learning and staff effectiveness through the ongoing development of our professional staff. Research has proven that no single school-based factor contributes more to the success of the students than high quality teachers. To ensure that all students have competent, high quality teachers, we utilize an evaluation and support structure that builds human capacity and challenges all educators to aspire to and reach excellence in their practice in order to provide a superior education for our students. Mirrored after Connecticut's SEED model, West Hartford's Teacher Evaluation and Development Program satisfies the Connecticut Guidelines for Educator Evaluation (Core Requirements), which were initially adopted by the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) in June 2012 and revised in February 2014 and again April 2017 in response to feedback from various stakeholder groups.

Our district Educator Evaluation and Development Program is a holistic and comprehensive process based on the following guiding principles:

- Consider multiple standards-based measures of performance – Our district model for teacher evaluation defines four components of teacher effectiveness: student growth and development, teacher performance and practice, parent feedback, and whole-school student learning indicators or student feedback.
- Emphasize growth over time – Our focus on continuous improvement is a key driver in the teacher evaluation process. The evaluation of a teacher's performance with regard to professional practice and student outcomes should reflect improvement from an established starting point. Attaining high levels of performance and/or maintaining high results are critical aspects of a teacher's work, therefore a rigorous and aspirational goal-setting process in this model encourages a cycle of continuous improvement over time.
- Promote both professional judgment and consistency - Assessing an educator's professional practice requires evaluators to constantly use their professional judgment. No rubric or formula, however detailed, can capture all of the nuances of how teachers and leaders interact with one another and with students. Synthesizing multiple sources of information into performance ratings is inherently more complex than checklists or numerical averages. At the same time, educators' ratings should depend on their performance, not on their evaluators' biases. Accordingly, the model aims to minimize the variance between evaluations of practice and support fairness and consistency within and across schools.
- Foster dialogue about student learning - The West Hartford Teacher Evaluation and Development Program is designed to show that of equal importance to getting better results is the professional conversation that takes place between a teacher and his/her evaluator. It is expected that dialogue in this model will occur frequently and focus on what students are learning and what administrators can do to support teaching and learning.
- Encourage aligned professional learning, coaching and feedback to support growth - All teachers, novice and veteran educators alike, deserve detailed, constructive feedback and professional learning tailored to the individual needs of their classrooms and students. Our district Teacher Evaluation and Development Program recognizes that student learning is a shared responsibility among teachers, administrators and district leaders, and expects teachers and administrators to develop goals and objectives in a way that supports overall school improvement.

Our teachers at Whiting Lane instill a growth mindset in our students and a belief that there are no limits to their potential or academic success. Students need to know that they have a voice, that they matter, and they are important. Students need to understand that perseverance, effort and hard work leads to success in the classroom. Most importantly, students need to have trusted adults at school who believe in them. When all of the above is realized and accomplished there are no limits to what a child can achieve. We do not allow our students to opt out. We instill in them an intrinsic motivation and desire to learn, to achieve, and to grow. We establish and foster a learning environment where expectations are high, yet the individualized supports are in place to help students reach their goals. We work tirelessly to close our achievement gap and level the playing field for all of our students, regardless of background, ethnicity, and/or socio-economic status. • Vision for Best Instructional Practice – Our frameworks for instructional practice and service delivery are grounded in a student centered approach that supports and develops independence and student responsibility for learning. Evaluation of practice considers not only teacher actions but the students' role in the learning, and gauges the impact of instructional strategies and decisions on student learning outcomes.