# U.S. Department of Education
## *2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program*

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Guilford High School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 605 New England Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

| Guilford | CT | 06437-1838 |
|---|---|---|
| City | State | Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) |

County New Haven County

Telephone (203) 453-2741                    Fax (203) 453-6768

Web site/URL  https://ghs.guilfordschools.org          E-mail    misentir@guilfordschools.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. Paul Freeman Ed.D.
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)   E-mail freemanp@guilfordschools.org

District Name Guilford Public Schools District          Tel.    (203) 453-8200
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 Mr. William Bloss
(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, write N/A in the space.*

# 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 2019 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 includes one or more of grades K-12.  Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.

4.  The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 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: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.

6.  The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.

7.  The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.

8.  The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.

9.  The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.

10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.

11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

# PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

**Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.**

## DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):

   4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
   2 Middle/Junior high schools
   1 High schools
   0 K-12 schools

   7 TOTAL

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

   [ ] Urban or large central city
   [X] Suburban
   [ ] Rural or small city/town

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

| Grade | # of Males | # of Females | Grade Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| PreK | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| K | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 9 | 143 | 136 | 279 |
| 10 | 132 | 133 | 265 |
| 11 | 136 | 151 | 287 |
| 12 or higher | 131 | 133 | 264 |
| Total Students | 542 | 553 | 1095 |

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

4.   Racial/ethnic composition of          0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
     the school (if unknown, estimate):     4 % Asian
                                            1 % Black or African American
                                            8 % Hispanic or Latino
                                            0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
                                            84 % White
                                            3 % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: 2%

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 *to* the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year | 11 |
| (2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year | 13 |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)] | 24 |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017 | 1131 |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4) | 0.02 |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100 | 2 |

6.   English Language Learners (ELL) in the school:      0 %
                                                        3 Total number ELL

     Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
     French, Mandarin Chinese, Thai

7.   Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals:      12 %
          Total number students who qualify:      128

8.  Students receiving special education services:      11 %

    125 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. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

    14 Autism                              4 Multiple Disabilities

    0 Deafness                             0 Orthopedic Impairment

    0 Deaf-Blindness                       22 Other Health Impaired

    0 Developmental Delay                  50 Specific Learning Disability

    17 Emotional Disturbance               8 Speech or Language Impairment

    0 Hearing Impairment                   1 Traumatic Brain Injury

    7 Intellectual Disability              2 Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9.  Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 12

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

| | Number of Staff |
|---|---|
| Administrators | 6 |
| Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher. | 57 |
| 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. | 17 |
| Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc. | 10 |

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

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

| Required Information | 2017-2018 | 2016-2017 | 2015-2016 | 2014-2015 | 2013-2014 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Daily student attendance | 97% | 97% | 95% | 96% | 95% |
| High school graduation rate | 99% | 99% | 100% | 100% | 99% |

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 2018.

| Post-Secondary Status | |
|---|---|
| Graduating class size | 294 |
| Enrolled in a 4-year college or university | 82% |
| Enrolled in a community college | 5% |
| Enrolled in career/technical training program | 2% |
| Found employment | 2% |
| Joined the military or other public service | 2% |
| Other | 7% |

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes _            No X

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.

Students are encouraged to be academically excellent and internationally minded as they blend their curiosity, effort, and integrity with creativity, collaboration, and compassion.

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

# PART III – SUMMARY

Guilford High School (GHS) is located in Guilford, Connecticut. The town, founded in 1639, is the seventh oldest township in Connecticut. Guilford is located on the shore of Long Island Sound, 20 minutes east of New Haven. With a population of approximately 22,000, the town is 47.6 square miles, making it the second largest town by area in the state. The town boasts over 140 historic homes, four historic museums and one of New England's finest traditional town greens. According to the 2014 U.S. Census Bureau, median household income for Guilford is $99,441, 40% higher than the state median. Many town residents have completed higher levels of education, with 50% holding a bachelor's degree or more. Students graduate at a rate of 99% from our high school and 90% pursue post-secondary education. Well-prepared teaching and support staff, collaborative and involved community members, and dedicated families work together to encourage and challenge our students to be lifelong learners.

A plan of study provides students with a systematic way in which they organize, pursue, and complete their high school experience. The plan is a self-identified blueprint that develops student agency by asking each individual to consider their own learning strengths and weaknesses in relation to the learning environment. GHS offers a wide variety of courses and enrichment opportunities to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of all students. As an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School, participating students engage in an academically rigorous and balanced program that prepares them for the demands of university and life after high school in our increasingly global society. Qualified students may enroll in Advanced Placement (AP) classes in biology, calculus, chemistry, computer science, English, French, physics, Spanish, economics, U.S. history, western civilization and music theory. Enrichment opportunities include the UCONN Early College Experience, Project Choice, Capstone Project, Educational Center for the Arts (ECA), and high school partnership programs with area institutions including Wesleyan University, Yale University, University of Connecticut, and University of New Haven. Crossroads, an alternative education program, provides students with a structured environment that supports them emotionally while focusing on learning. A full range of co-curricular activities are available as well as 27 varsity level athletic teams. Acclaimed music, art, and drama programs round out the varied experiences available to GHS students.

Creating a school environment that is physically and emotionally safe and a culture of caring are district priorities well-supported at GHS. Advisory was created to ensure every student in the high school has at least one adult to whom he or she can turn. All students meet regularly in small groups with a teacher or administrator and have conversations centered on social, emotional and academic well-being. The school's Therapeutic Learning Center provides support to students who may find it difficult to navigate the school day. During the annual End the "R" Word campaign, students with and without intellectual disabilities encourage peers to sign a pledge to stop the use of the word "retard/retarded," and other derogatory language. Unity Week brings the school community together through daily collaborative activities and anti-bullying messaging. Each spring, members of SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) and D.A.Y. (Developmental Assets for Youth) remind classmates of the dangers of substance abuse with a mock car crash, displays of purple flags around the school's bus loop (and throughout the community) signifying good decisions, and the signing of a pledge committing to be substance free. Student voice is further developed through participation on school and district-wide committees addressing topics that include vaping and dress code policy, representation on the Board of Education, and inclusion in interviews to hire key personnel in the district.

After almost a decade of research and planning, the new Guilford High School opened in September 2015, marking a milestone in the school's history. The original school was built in 1958 while our new facility meets all expectations of a 21st Century, flexible, state-of-the-art learning facility designed to address all programming needs. Designing the new school was a collaborative and inclusive process, reflective of the school's philosophy to involve stakeholders in decision making. Students, staff, and community members participated in visioning days, charrettes, and public forums contributing to the design of the facility.

School traditions include Launch Day, the culminating activity to the popular Voyages and Vessels course when students launch the vessels they have built; award winning spring musicals; physics students successful participation in the American Association of Physics Teachers' Physics Bowl and TEAM

competition; the College Fair; Scholarship Night; the annual staff vs. students volleyball game; the Thanksgiving eve football game versus Hand High School in neighboring Madison, CT; and improving the educational opportunities for young women of color from under-represented communities through the Guilford A Better Chance (ABC) program. Guilford High School's most storied tradition, June commencement exercises, are held on the town green for all to celebrate our graduating seniors.

# PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

**1.  Core Curriculum:**

**1a.  Reading/English language arts:**

Rooted in the Connecticut Core Standards, our language arts curriculum is based on the belief that all students benefit from a systematic, ongoing literacy program that is organized at each grade level to build on previous learning. The four major content standards of reading, writing, language, speaking and listening progressively introduce terms and skills designed to prepare students for college and career demands.

Our instructional practices are grounded in the belief that every student can learn the skills, knowledge, and habits of mind inherent in our curriculum. Informed by ongoing formative assessments and by school-based and statewide summative assessments, our instructors work in grade level professional learning communities (PLCs) to identify our students' strengths and areas for growth in order to target instruction. We differentiate instruction to meet the needs of every student through such practices as the use of exemplars, close reading exercises, academically productive talk, providing formative writing to learn exercises, providing ongoing effective feedback, scaffolding, chunking, and individual conferences with students. Students play an active role in the evaluation of their work. In accord with our district's focus on the Principles of Learning and High Leverage Practices, we strive to engage every student in productive struggle at every stage and in every aspect of the learning process.

The recent implementation of the International Baccalaureate program has deepened our commitment to encourage students to explore their place in the world and to take risks in the learning process. We strive to develop student agency for learning, to build critical thinking skills relevant across a range of disciplines, to grow understanding of other perspectives and cultures, and to use research tools/technology effectively and ethically. Our students progressively build upon the specific skills, knowledge, approaches, and tasks that they will need to meet the challenges of college and career.

**1b.  Mathematics:**

The overarching goals of our mathematics curriculum focus on developing students' ability to think and reason mathematically as well as to communicate and apply mathematical understandings. Across the curriculum, these goals are grounded in the Common Core Mathematical Content and Practice Standards. The curriculum focuses on big ideas, essential questions, and building coherence and connections. Curriculum, instruction and assessments aligned with the Connecticut Core Standards are employed to build problem-solving skills, fostering college and career readiness.

Instructional strategies in our mathematics classrooms are guided by the Common Core Math Practice Standards in conjunction with the Principles of Learning and High Leverage Practices. Our guiding principles involve engaging students in productive struggle, challenging them within their zones of proximal development. In their learning of mathematics, students are encouraged to embrace risk-taking and view mistakes as opportunities to learn, as they build their perseverance and problem-solving skills. Math instruction aims to provide students with relevant and real-world problems with multiple entry points so that all students have access. Through learning mathematics, students are engaged in exploring problem-solving strategies using multiple representations (graphic, numeric, algebraic, visual, verbal), connecting mathematical concepts to various disciplines, applying mathematics in real-world contexts, analyzing information, and strategically employing technology to support and enhance student learning.

Assessment practices (formative and summative) are designed to monitor student learning, inform instruction, and guide interventions. Math teachers work collaboratively within their PLCs to develop and implement common assessments that reflect the goals of our mathematics curriculum. Guided by the Guilford Framework for Teaching and Learning, all teachers including math teachers develop student learning objectives (SLOs) on an annual basis and measure students' progress toward these goals throughout

the year using specific Indicators of Academic Growth and Development (IAGDs). Assessment data provides a vehicle for a process of continual improvement of teaching and learning mathematics.

## 1c. Science:

GHS has embraced the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and has begun implementing our revised curriculum that is fully aligned to these standards. It is our overarching goal to enhance our students' ability to think like scientists as they delve deeply into conceptual understanding of the content. Our teachers regularly use three dimensional learning outlined in the NGSS to teach our students new ways to think about science. The use of anchoring phenomena and modeling help our students realize that not every problem must be solved in the same way. Through this three dimensional approach to scientific study, we push our students to deepen their comprehension of science while allowing them to apply their understanding to real world situations. This approach allows our students to best prepare themselves for what awaits them after they leave our school. At GHS we have also implemented many classes that push our students to learn at a college level before they graduate. Our students can take AP classes in biology, chemistry and physics. They can also apply to our IB program which offers science classes in biology, chemistry and physics. For those wanting to experience a different type of challenge, we have courses aligned with the University of Connecticut in environmental science. Our science teachers work collaboratively in PLCs to develop common assessments for science courses and to make adjustments to units of instruction based on student assessment data and criteria outlined in the next generation science assessment.

## 1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

Effective social studies instruction and assessment at GHS is an inquiry-based model aligned to the Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks, the Connecticut Core Standards, and the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Social Studies State Standards. The dimensions of inquiry include developing questions, applying disciplinary concepts, and evaluating sources that lead students to develop and communicate evidence-based claims and conclusions. Student practice in these dimensions leads to a research project in each core course. Inquiry is bolstered by our instructors' collaborative work in grade level PLCs. Instructional approaches and assessment are aligned with the High Leverage Practices of Academically Productive Talk, in the form of student-run accountable talk discussions, Writing to Learn activities, such as quick-writes and work slips, and Providing Effective Feedback, through conferences, use of rubrics, and Google Classroom. Co-taught classes, at each core grade level, provide a framework for differentiation, tiered instruction, and interventions.

Instructional approaches aligned to the High Leverage Practices include allowing student choice regarding project based learning; differentiating based on observed performance; 504 accommodations; and IEP modifications. The use of electronic textbook suites and Google Classroom also provide opportunities for technology-based support. Additionally, teachers use a departmental writing rubric for giving student feedback on writing and mark schemes for primary source analysis through the International Baccalaureate inspired Origin, Purpose, Content, Value, and Limitations (OPCVL) method.

Collaboration among grade level teachers and the department, as a whole, occur in person each Wednesday after school during professional development time, and throughout the week, electronically, through the Google Docs/Classroom platform. Collaborative work includes aligning topics from the curriculum for instruction, planning formative and summative assessments, and using assessment results/data to inform instruction. In the past two years, teachers have added a more formal way to analyze student work through participating in a quarterly student work protocol.

## 1e. For secondary schools:

Through proactive leadership and advocacy, the school counseling curriculum provides opportunities for all learners to engage in college and career readiness preparation. Individualized academic planning, career exploration, and personal/social awareness activities support student development of specific knowledge, attitudes, and skills to prepare for meaningful and rewarding lives as productive members of a changing society. Programs and services are provided in a 9-12 strategic sequence to maximize student outcomes and

establish a foundation for lifelong learning. Ongoing targeted goal setting and self-reflection regarding interests and aptitudes help to inform individualized planning and problem solving to maximize student potential.

**1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and four-year old students:**

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

The art department offers courses in drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics, and fibers starting with introductory levels and leading to college level IB and AP offerings. Additional offerings include a unified course comprised of special education students co-enrolled with typical peers. Class sizes range from 20-24 students with a total of 27 sections for a school year. In addition to learning core elements of art and principles of design, students leave the program having developed practical skills, fine motor skills, and innovative problem solving skills. Students grow through the documentation of their processes in visual arts journals and the creation of final products for college portfolios. In addition, students lead exhibits and participate in juried art shows.

In the physical education department, 100 percent of ninth and tenth grade students are enrolled in courses and receive 1.5 credits of physical education, exceeding the graduation requirement from the State of Connecticut. Beyond the core requirements for all students, the department offers a variety of elective courses in which junior and senior students may choose to participate. The elective courses address a variety of student interests creating multiple opportunities for our upperclassmen to pursue learning about lifetime health and wellness. All physical education courses provide students with the opportunity to develop inter- and intra-personal, conflict resolution, and problem solving skills while pursuing individual health and wellness.

The world language department offers a full sequence of Spanish, French and Latin. Included in our offerings are honors classes in 3rd and 4th level, IB French, IB Spanish, AP Spanish Language and Culture, and AP French Language and Culture. We also offer two years of Arabic. Although our language offerings are completely elective, the department enjoys a robust enrollment of 869 out of 1095 students, 79.4% of the student body. Most students not currently enrolled in a language class are seniors who have completed their language study. World language curriculum is proficiency-focused and performance-based and consists of thematic units cultivating students' ability to be internationally and civic minded citizens as they develop their ability to communicate in all three modes of communication.

The Information Technology Center (ITC) provides access to materials in varied formats for all content areas. Our goal is to ensure that every student has the opportunity to become an independent, effective, responsible and creative user of ideas and information. Students become critical users of information, develop rigorous standards for their work, learn to analyze their materials and document sources, and create high quality products. To encourage leisure reading and listening, the ITC has an extensive fiction, audio book, and magazine and periodical collection. The integration of online academic subscription databases offers continuous curricular support on campus or at home. The databases address every department's curricular needs. The ITC is open before, during, and after school.

The technology department utilizes the engineering design process to provide students in grades 9-12 with a method to solve problems in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Through the use of hands on/minds on activities, students develop higher order thinking and increased problem-solving skills. In addition, varied course offerings in the business department introduce approximately 125 students each year to courses found in business programs at the university level.

GHS celebrates a comprehensive program in the performing arts. The music department features a performance-based program of ten ensembles. Four of these groups are selected by audition while the remainder are available to all students. These ensembles have performed both nationally and internationally to high acclaim. In addition, electives are offered in AP Music Theory, Preparatory Music Theory, Basic

Guitar, Improvisation and Voice. Fifty percent of the student population takes advantage of these offerings. The Guilford High School Theatre Arts program (GHSTA) is a multifaceted program which affords students the opportunity to participate in theatre as creators, designers, directors and performers for the 3 annual main stage productions and through the theatre arts course offerings which include: Theatre Experience; IB Theatre; and Technical Theatre as well as numerous theatre arts independent study options. Courses and participation in GHSTA productions are open to all students and have a focus on inclusion of all learners. Approximately 20% of all GHS students are involved in the Theatre Arts annually as actors, technicians, writers, musicians or students in the curricular classes.

### 3.  Special Populations:

The Department of Pupil Services provides supports and services to students with an array of disabilities. Services are designated through the student's Individualized Education Plans and within the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) process. Students receive services in a variety of environments including general education classrooms, related service classrooms, and community-based settings. Students with disabilities are fully integrated within the GHS community. GHS believes in a true inclusive experience for our learners. Differentiated instructional practices are evident at each instructional level as staff meet the needs of each diverse learner. Expectations and assignments are differentiated for students performing below grade level as well as for those performing at or above grade level.

Opportunities for students performing at or above grade level include AP courses, Early College Experience courses in partnership with the University of Connecticut, and honors course work. In addition, GHS celebrated its inaugural year as an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School that offers the Diploma Program.

To ensure the diverse learner is provided with a rich and rigorous instructional experience, GHS refines our service delivery to reflect the needs of our learners. GHS embeds the core instructional principals of Universal Design for Learning: the belief in flexible learning environments that can accommodate the individual learning differences of our students. Through this process all students are provided an equal opportunity to succeed. Simply because a student has been identified as having learning challenges does not restrict them from having rich and diverse learning experiences. Differing abilities do not dictate a student's ability to succeed in our classrooms. Through these processes of differentiated instruction as well as cooperative learning, performance-based assessments, project based learning and multi-sensory student-centered learning, GHS strives to meet each student's learning needs. Students also participate in vocational and transition activities to prepare them for post-secondary learning opportunities including college placement, competitive employment, and adult centered learning programs.

GHS provides rich extracurricular experience for the diverse learner population. Typical peers partner with students in a variety of ways including socially and academically. These partnerships provide students with disabilities the opportunity for a truly inclusive educational experience. GHS integrates peer tutoring opportunities for students with different learning abilities. The Guilford High School Unified Sports Program is an exemplary and Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Association (CIAC) recognized program and serves approximately 125 students. Students are engaged in play-based activities that create enduring friendships and partnerships among students with differing abilities. GHS also participates annually in the End the "R" Word campaign, and has a well-developed and highly functioning Special Education Parent Teacher Organization (SEPTO).

# PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. **School Climate/Culture:**

Guilford High School provides a school environment that nurtures students' academic, social and emotional growth. GHS has numerous opportunities specifically designed to support our curriculum and provide students with opportunities to explore their interests in exciting and engaging ways. In order to create a school culture that is open and respectful of differences, we have established our Safe Schools Climate Committee and Unity Club. The climate committee uses our annual climate survey data that is administered to students, faculty and staff, and parents to create programs that address areas of school improvement. Such programs include Unity Week, pep rallies, End the "R" Word campaign, and End the 'N" Word campaign. We also have clubs that offer the opportunity for students to better our school and local communities while extending their learning. These clubs include Action Against Hunger, Apple Pi Robotics, Students Against Destructive Decisions, Developmental Assets for Youth (D.A.Y.), Interact, and math and debate teams. GHS understands the importance of reducing stress and anxiety in students. We have dedicated counselors, teachers, and social workers supporting our students' social and emotional needs. Their work is supported by our advisory, mentoring, and mindfulness programs that offer students strategies to help navigate the challenges of the day.

At GHS teachers are valued and appreciated throughout the school year. The Faculty Advisory Council meets with the school's principal, affording our staff the opportunity to provide input to administration on a monthly basis. The entire staff is called upon often to work collaboratively with each other on school improvement initiatives, and they are recognized often by our school's parent group, Connections, and administration through appreciation breakfasts, luncheons, and awards. One such recognition, the Collaboration Award, is presented each month to a faculty member.

Teachers are engaged in PLCs where they are provided meeting time to examine student work, analyze assessments, and receive instructional feedback from colleagues. The interdepartmental work areas enhance instructional conversations across all content areas. Teachers are provided opportunities to participate in district-wide curriculum development and review committees and school-based improvement initiatives. Teachers enjoy being a part of the GHS community as demonstrated by their desire to participate in clubs and after school activities including intramural volleyball comprised of teacher and student teams. Our Sunshine Club plans teacher socials, provides gifts for special occasions, and supports colleagues during difficult times. Teachers are afforded the opportunity to attend local and national professional development and upon return share their new learning with colleagues. The administration is available, visible, and welcomes collaboration with teachers.

2. **Engaging Families and Community:**

GHS enjoys an engaged and collaborative relationship with our families and community. Our partnerships have fostered several activities that have improved our school and had a direct result on student success. Our families work closely with our school's counseling department in planning and monitoring their students' academic course of studies, as well as their post graduate plans. The department hosts freshman parent morning coffee sessions that afford parents the opportunity to engage with our school counselors. The department also hosts a college fair. In addition, a sophomore and junior parent night are held to inform our families of the transition challenges between grade levels and ensure a pathway for success. Our high school annually hosts a senior scholarship evening and a school awards night for students, their families, and the community. Our community contributes more than $100,000 to support students' post graduate plans. Student accomplishments are well publicized in our local newspapers, newsletters, our web site, and regular electronic communications. As well, our high school hosts two parent-teacher conference evenings in the fall and spring at which time teachers and parents meet to support the academic, social, and emotional progress of the student. The high school's mentoring program is another support system for the growth of our students. The mentoring program involves more than 150 community members who volunteer to meet weekly with students. The Guilford Fund for Education and the Guilford Foundation are examples of community organizations that enhance the learning experiences for teachers and students.

These organizations provide grant money for educational initiatives that enrich and support current instruction. Our parent volunteer organization, Connections, funds programs and activities that directly benefit students, as well as offering evening presentations on a variety of topics appropriate to the needs of our families. Our partnership with nearby Yale University brings professors into classrooms to engage with students in rigorous and demanding learning. Our families and the community support our athletic teams, unified program, music program and theater arts productions by volunteering time and resources that benefit students.

Students at GHS are encouraged to reach out into the community and practice civic and social responsibility. Students in Action Against Hunger annually collect truckloads of nonperishable items for our local Guilford Food Bank while our student senate sponsors biannual blood drives. The Advanced Woodworking class has partnered with the Menunkatuck Audubon Society to build barn owl boxes and osprey nesting platforms, as well as book share kiosks around the town green.

3. **Professional Development:**

Professional learning at Guilford High School is a complex array of interrelated learning opportunities including full faculty data analysis, PLC and/or department curriculum and learning experiences, and individual professional growth activities. We believe that no matter what type of activity is included in the definition, we adhere to some core features of effective professional learning in order to change knowledge, practice, and, ultimately, improve student learning.

First, the most effective professional learning is ongoing. Teachers need time to learn new skills, try them out, evaluate their effectiveness, and make adjustments for further improvement. Staying focused on a few topics contributes to the depth of knowledge and to the establishment of strong habits that help teachers assist all students. For example, for the past three years, our school has focused on three high leverage practices in all subjects:  Facilitating Academically Productive Talk, Providing Effective Feedback, and Providing Opportunities for Writing to Learn. Not only does this provide a focus for our work, it also contributes to the coherence across professional development activity types and coherence to district initiatives, our second core feature.

Next, we believe that teachers should have opportunities to be actively involved in professional learning, such as observing and receiving feedback, analyzing student work, and leading professional sessions for colleagues. GHS teachers have videoed classroom instruction to analyze strengths and opportunities for growth. Each year, the school invites a district team, including a Board of Education member, the superintendent, the assistant superintendent, and a principal from another school, to conduct a Learning Walk of the school and provide feedback to the faculty on the implementation of professional development in real time.

Furthermore, a large percentage of the professional learning at GHS is grounded in content. We believe that when groups of teachers are collaboratively analyzing the standards and assessment results in order to develop units and lessons that will support learning, teachers will be accountable to one another and to the vision of the school.

And lastly, the principal at GHS is part of a district leadership team that values professional learning for its administrators. Every month, leaders engage as learners around a coherent set of experiences that they can customize for their buildings and facilitate professional learning for their staff. This year's topic has been the Waterwheel of Formative Assessment, Effective Feedback, and Self-Management of Learning which ties our High Leverage Practices into manageable classroom implementation and supports reflective learners.

4. **School Leadership:**

Leadership at GHS extends beyond the office of the principal. The capacity of our school's leadership team is strengthened throughout by a firm belief that a culture of collaboration must exist among all stakeholders. The assistant principal and two deans of students partner with the principal in instructional

leadership and administer to the needs of our students, faculty, staff and the facility in general. Administrators collaborate often with our school's 10 department chair people, who in turn lead PLCs within their departments. More often than not, PLCs adopt an action research stance, approaching continuous improvement through a plan-do-study-act (PDSA) protocol. Together, the extended leadership within the school supports learning through a dogged focus on high quality instruction, professional collaboration, and effective instructional resources.

Our leadership team is built upon supportive relationships and positive decision-making, while enhancing our school climate to be more globally and culturally aware and accepting. Recently, our entire high school learning community moved into a new building. As a result of our school's leadership structure, all stakeholders were involved in the design of the building, its classrooms and the accompanying outdoor facilities. Our school community now benefits from collaborative, interdepartmental instructional and office spaces affording unlimited opportunities for teachers to share best practices, successfully plan, and develop instruction across all content areas. The success of these efforts is measured by a collection of evidence of learning across all departments. The leadership team provides regular, timely, job-embedded and ongoing professional development to provide all teachers with the best resources and training necessary to advance each student's trajectory of learning. The principal, in collaboration with the District Leadership Team (DLT), searches for and develops the best, scientifically proven instructional practices and uses the school's professional development time to share and enhance the planning and teaching skills of all teachers. The district-wide focus on the three High Leverage Practices (Facilitating Academically Productive Talk, Providing Effective Feedback, and Providing Opportunities for Writing to Learn) offers a clear example of this methodology. The high school's administrative leadership team has provided extended professional learning on these practices; department chairs have emphasized them in their PLC meetings and PDSA cycles; teachers have developed instructional and professional goals around them; and observations (both individual and whole-school Learning Walks) have looked for evidence of these practices in our classrooms.

# Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

One practice that has been the most instrumental to our success at GHS has been the implementation of High Leverage Practices (HLPs) in the past two years. Predicated on the research presented by the Institute for Learning at the University of Pittsburgh, the frequent use of the HLPs in the classroom make classroom instruction effective in developing students' skills and promoting their mastery of content. The three High Leverage Practices of Facilitating Academically Productive Talk, Providing Effective Feedback, and Providing Opportunities for Writing to Learn all support students being able to understand and to construct their own meaning of what they are learning. They impact students' abilities to recognize their individual learning and to articulate how they learn so they become more independent. Each of these practices lend themselves to and are strengthened by adjusting our instruction.

The use of these three practices is present in the expectations that exist for teachers in Guilford Public Schools, and at GHS these practices can be observed in classrooms across disciplines and instructional levels. A focus on writing to learn has existed for some time at our school. It can be seen in classrooms across content areas when students annotate text, engage in quick writes, or participate in stop and jot activities—all of which serve to hone students' close reading skills and allow them to synthesize new ideas about their understanding of content. In math classrooms, students are challenged to explain their thinking and their problem-solving approaches; while in science classes, students are generating ideas to explain complex concepts.

Similarly, incorporating opportunities for students to engage in academically productive talk is well established in our school. Whether students are asked to turn and talk to a classmate, divided into collaborative work groups, participating in Socratic seminars, fish bowl discussions, whole class discussions, or jigsaw reading activities, they are consistently encouraged to socialize their collective intelligence and construct deeper meaning.

In addition, there are multiple opportunities for students to give and receive actionable feedback, not only from their teachers, but from their peers. Students engage in reflective writing, peer review, and the engineering design process as common experiences that require them to offer each other feedback on their expression of ideas and understanding of content.

All teachers are members of a professional learning community in which they analyze student work, plan instruction and assessments, and develop their practice collaboratively with colleagues. They are supported by the administration who work with them to expand the use of HLPs in all of our classrooms.