

U.S. Department of Education
2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 21 Notre Dame Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Cambridge State MA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 02140-2505

County Middlesex County

Telephone (617) 497-7771 Fax (617) 497-4223

Web site/URL <https://www.banneker.org/> E-mail sbretous@banneker.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.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Ms. Sherley Bretous E-mail sbretous@banneker.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Benjamin Banneker Charter Public Tel. (617) 497-7771

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

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mrs. Linda Tucker
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

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

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

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2023 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 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
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 (2022-2023) 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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
0 Middle/Junior high schools
0 High schools
0 K-12 schools
- 1 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, 2022 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 Students
PreK	20
K	44
1	46
2	48
3	41
4	47
5	46
6	39
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	331

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 82 % Black or African American
 - 8 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 3 % White
 - 5 % 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 2021 - 2022 school year: ≤1%

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, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	2
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	2
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	334
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<1

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

Amharic, Creole(Haitian), Arabic, Tigrinya, Niger-Congo, Urdu, Gujarati, Chinese, Nepali, Tigre, Spanish, Twi

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 6 %
19 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 100 %

Total number students who qualify: 331

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 16 %
Total number of students served 52

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 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>5</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>8</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>11</u> Developmental Delay	<u>13</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>15</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 1 %
Total number of students served: 3

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 14

11. 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	5
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	17
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	13
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

12. 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 11:1

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

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	93%	99%	97%	95%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **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 2022.

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%

15. 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.

16. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

The Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School is a K1 through grade 6 Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) school serving all students. The school is founded on the belief that all students are able to develop academic mastery, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, culture, native language, gender or sexual orientation. The staff of caring, dedicated, and highly qualified professionals integrate language and fine arts into the standard-based STEM curricula and uses authentic data to monitor every student's growth and achievement.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/536a407be4b0ef2b782b9a0b/t/63e0774c8c6d493c83e49f2c/1675654988941/Civil+Rights+Policy.pdf>

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

Charter: Benjamin Banneker operates on an open enrollment process. We conduct a lottery, and Cambridge families and siblings are first priority as we are based in Cambridge. Our next lottery will be held on Wednesday, March 8, 2023 for the 2023-2024 school year. Any available seats for the school will be chosen by a lottery which will be held at the Banneker. The deadline for accepting applications is March 7, 2023, the day before the Lottery. Applications received after March 7, 2023, will be put on a waitlist for SY 2023-2024.

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

The Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School (Banneker) has been educating students in Cambridge and the Greater Boston area for the past 27 years. The school was the inspiration of a coalition of community leaders, parents, and educators. Concerned by the underachievement of minority, low-income and disenfranchised students in Cambridge Public Schools, the founding coalition wanted to establish a learning community where all students would excel regardless of race or socioeconomic status. The school was named in honor of the self-taught 18th century African-American mathematician, scientist, astronomer and inventor, Benjamin Banneker. In 1996, the Banneker received its first charter, and opened with 195 students in grades K through 4 then expanded to K through 8 by the 1999-2000 school year. In 2006, however, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education renewed Banneker's second charter term with “conditions and probation,” and restructured the school from grades K-8 to K-6, due to low academic performance.

Currently, the Banneker serves 331 predominantly black and brown students. The student body is 81.6% African-American, 8% Latinx, 2% White, and 5% Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic and almost two thirds of the student population is Economically Disadvantaged. In addition, 38.9% of students come from families whose first language is not English and 11.4% of students have disabilities. Noteworthy, is the Banneker’s inclusive staff. One of the most diverse communities of educators in the Commonwealth, with 59% of the teaching staff and 80% of the leadership team being people of color, the school continues to foster the vision of the founding coalition.

The Banneker is the highest-performing predominantly black elementary school in the Commonwealth. According to the 2022-2023 Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s data on race and ethnicity for grades 3-8 school districts, the Banneker’s student population is 81.6% black, second only to a Charter School in Brockton, Massachusetts. Although schools with a high concentration of black students tend to be failing schools with significant disparities in achievement between black students and their white academic peers, this is not the case at the Banneker. Our students have outperformed white students on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), in English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics and science, for five consecutive years.

On the spring of 2022 MCAS, Banneker's students performed among the best in the state – comparable with some of the wealthiest communities in the Commonwealth. In mathematics, students demonstrated tremendous growth, increasing 31 percentage points over 2021 scores and exceeding 2019 pre-pandemic performance. In ELA, students showed substantial achievement, despite the prevalent declines in reading and writing scores statewide in the early grades. In fact, Banneker's students are achieving at rates at about twice the statewide average for all students and more than three times the statewide average for black students.

Although Banneker is one of the highest performing elementary schools in Massachusetts, high achievement on standardized tests like the MCAS is not the only goal. Rather, Banneker's ultimate goal is to nurture lifelong learners who understand themselves and their place in the world around them. In addition to providing our students with a rigorous standards-based curriculum focused on the Science Technology Engineering Mathematics (STEM) subjects, Banneker offers them a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities such as visual and performing arts, numerous field trips and outdoor experiences including skiing, canoeing and horseback riding. We are deeply committed to creating an environment in which learning is fun and joyful – an environment in which children come to see themselves as readers, writers, mathematicians, scientists, artists, and critical thinkers. Our community's success is built on the strength of our relationships. We strive to ensure that every Banneker student feels known, seen and heard; that every student can name at least one adult outside of his or her classroom teacher who they deeply trust. Without the foundation of these strong relationships, our sustained high achievement would not be possible.

Our parents know we are invested in their children. When mothers, fathers and caregivers walk through our building, they see welcoming faces who look like them. Not just in the cafeteria but in the classrooms and among the school's small leadership team. These close relationships, rooted in a shared commitment to educating children to achieve excellence, have allowed our school to close the achievement gap and perform

at levels of excellence that too many silently believe are unattainable for students of color.

Additionally, providing teachers with the support they need enables them to provide the support that the students need. We're constantly focused on our classroom teachers' professional development to ensure they have the skills and resources to reach each and every one of the diverse learners in their classrooms. Banneker's professional development occurs in multiple forms. We offer "whole school" professional development where our teachers study a specific element for three years. Additionally, all teachers receive coaching from instructional experts. We have mathematics, science, and literacy coaches on staff full-time who provide leadership in the areas of instruction, curriculum and assessment.

Every classroom at Banneker has two teachers – a lead teacher and an associate teacher – who are in the classroom full-time. Associate teachers are provided with deep support to grow into lead teachers. They participate in the same professional development as the lead teachers and benefit from intensive coaching and mentoring from their partner lead teachers. This creates a sustainable model for our staff, who approach instruction as a true team effort. In addition, our development program for aspiring teachers helps us find diverse candidates and groom and train them over time, ensuring we have a pipeline of talent available who already know the school, the community, the mission, and the dedication required to succeed at Banneker.

Investing in developing teacher capacity creates an environment where educators choose to stay. At Banneker, we experience minimal teacher turnover, and that even remained true during the pandemic when, across the nation, teachers were leaving the profession in droves. There is no question that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our students academically, emotionally, socially, and even physically, with many of our youngest children struggling with simple tasks like putting on their coats and running in the playground. But what we know is that strong relationships, high-quality instruction, and a commitment to supporting one another will enable us to ensure every child achieves excellence.

The Banneker has come a very long way in its mission of ensuring that black and brown students overcome the stubborn and systemic barriers to success. With the unwavering support of our Board of Directors, the passion and dedication of our staff, along with the strength of our parent partnerships, the Banneker community remains steadfast in its commitment to keeping the spirit of Benjamin Banneker burning brightly within the soul of every student.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

Banneker's English Language Arts program follows the Literacy Collaborative model, a research-based, instructional framework that is language-based, student-centered, and both process and outcome oriented. Our reading and writing curriculum is organized into six units of study and are vertically and horizontally aligned to the Massachusetts State Standards. All units of study are connected in a manner that enables students to read, write, talk, and think critically and analytically about a range of texts. Additionally, at the Banneker our language and word study curriculum focuses on the essential elements of phonics and oral language development. It consists of daily word study lessons that cover language, word knowledge and vocabulary.

As we continue to improve our practice of using data to guide instruction, we have committed to using the iReady diagnostic assessment in both ELA and math for pre-, mid, and end-of-year data collection and monitoring. This gives the school at least two measures for each grade to allow a pre-post comparison to assess annual growth. For our older students, the results of our analysis are promising as an indicator of annual academic growth by grade, class and student.

Working with our outside learning analytics partner, coordinating data literacy and blended learning, we are testing how well these diagnostic tools align to internal assessments and most importantly, actual MCAS outcomes.

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

The Banneker math program promotes student mastery of grade level Massachusetts Curriculum Framework expectations. We use a variety of curriculum resources and instructional practices to help every student access math content and develop habits in keeping with the math practice standards. All grades have a minimum of eight math blocks a week and include a daily whole group lesson, small group instruction and independent or small group practice. The math coach and teachers meet weekly with grade level teams to discuss the pacing and the specific skills and understandings students need to acquire for each math topic. In addition, student progress is discussed and students who need additional help are identified. The math coach discusses the identified students with the math interventionist. The math intervention teacher supports these students in small groups either in class or in pull-outs based on the specific needs.

A wide range of printed and online resources are used to ensure we are reaching all students. These include but are not limited to: Ready Common Core, Math in Focus, Envisions, Engage New York, Developing Number Concepts, iReady Diagnostics, IXL, Tang Math and Rational Number Project, Units 1 and 2.

Last year we launched an innovative Math Challenge, a schoolwide program that was instrumental in engaging students as they closed gaps from the past two years during COVID 19. The program is designed using data to pinpoint specific standards or areas of weakness. Teachers assign tasks on IXL that correlate to this data and students practice these skills outside of the classroom and on their own time. Students are encouraged and incentivized to do this by having assemblies and earning prizes throughout the year.

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

Science taps into a child's innate curiosity, and as a STEM school, the Banneker believes that students can be motivated to learn science if given the chance to explore and become engaged with the many aspects of scientific discovery. Our cross-grade level curriculum offers concrete experiences on which to build scientific conceptual understandings, process skills, persistence and the application of mathematical skill and reasoning. At Banneker, students have five x 45 minute blocks of science a week and all include hands-on activities that engage their scientific thinking. Additionally, many classrooms have class pets that help

support the Life Science unit.

Banneker's science curriculum is reviewed continuously and evolves to enhance our use of technology and new methods to engage students. This standards-based curriculum has the topics from each of the four science domains: Life Science, Earth & Space Science, Physical Science, Technology/Engineering aligned vertically within each grade and horizontally across grades, to create a sequenced and coherent arrangement that is easy for students to understand and for teachers to adopt and adapt.

The primary goal is to provide students with the knowledge and understanding of science that enables them to: view their natural world in ways that make meaning and sense to them; relate science to their everyday life experiences; engage in practices and ways of thinking that establish, extend and refine their knowledge and understanding of science; and to participate in caring for and sustaining their natural environment, develop creativity and imagination through science, and learn about the joys of human scientific achievement.

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

Our social studies curriculum is evolving and new teaching methods are constantly being explored and used to introduce basic civics, geography and history of America to our students. At Banneker, Social Studies comes alive for students using leading edge technologies and group based projects to study and re-enact many pivotal events in history. Each year Banneker celebrates the life of its namesake, Benjamin Banneker on November 9th, his birthday. Second grade students research and discuss his achievements during early colonial times in America, which is a requirement. They recreate one of his famous inventions, the wooden clock, by creating one of their own during their STEM sessions. There is a whole school celebration and enhancement in character of Benjamin Banneker himself and all his life experiences during the celebration.

Walking into any social studies class, you can encounter students working with technological devices for research to write about key events in American history. Another class may be re-enacting a key event using video or green screen techniques which can be found in our digital studio. This helps students understand and interpret key events throughout United States History.

The Banneker social studies curriculum goes beyond the classroom. Through many of our extracurricular programs, students learn about musicians and artists in a historical context and are able to either perform or watch performances to celebrate their importance. Through the arts, students create works related to historical events and the world's cultures. Banneker's social studies program places a special emphasis on creating a lasting social and global awareness among our 5th and 6th graders.

1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:

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

The philosophy of the Banneker K1 program is to ensure that childhood is a joyful time. Children at the Banneker are provided with opportunities to explore the world, practice skills, and learn to navigate and develop age appropriate social and emotional interactions. Our K1 curriculum naturally taps into a child's innate curiosity, and as a STEM school, we believe that students are motivated when given the chance to explore and become engaged with the many aspects of learning.

Banneker follows the Massachusetts preschool state standards that are student-directed and involves hands-on experiences with people, objects, events, and ideas. Students engage in daily science, math, reading, phonics and writing instruction and activities. Additionally, they participate in a morning and afternoon elective daily (art, music, library, technology, or physical education).

Our rigorous and engaging program helps develop the necessary foundational skills to become lifelong learners.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

Visual Art is an important component of the Banneker core academic curriculum. Our curriculum is based on Art History and the Massachusetts Frameworks for Art Education. It is designed to provide students with basic technical skills as artists and an understanding of the fundamental elements of design (line, shape, color, texture, form, value and space). Students participate in art education weekly and have opportunities throughout the year to showcase their artistic skills. Whether it is during the Spring Art show, fourth grade musical, various maker spaces, grade level bulletin boards, classroom doors or the STEAMS expo, our building is their showroom. Not only does the school offer the platform for students to express their creativity, it also provides opportunities for them to learn art history and for our sixth graders to visit the Museum of Fine Arts and the Art History Museum in DC.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

Our physical education (PE) program closely follows the National Standards for Physical Education. Our PE teacher provides a curriculum that develops student's skills through new and creative activities and meets with every class once a week for 45 minutes. With the exception of our K-1 class which meets twice a week. Through these activities students gain confidence in themselves and others while increasing overall fitness. Students in kindergarten through second grade participate in activities that emphasize basic locomotor movements along with fine motor and gross motor development.

Students in third through sixth grade participate in more sport-based skill development activities. Some of the sports are non-traditional and emphasize cooperation and teamwork in the frameworks and student achievement goals.

Additionally, throughout the year, our physical education teacher organizes Fitness Fridays, Wellness Wednesdays and an end of year field day for all grades.

2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)

2d. Technology/library/media

Technology continues to be a fundamental part of both the teaching and learning process. Students learn that technology is a resource and tool with which they can improve the world in which they live. In addition to teachers having their own computers, iPads in each K1 and grade two classroom, and a MacBook for every student in the third through sixth grade, Banneker provides a state-of-the-art Digital Learning Studio. There are also Apple TVs in every classroom. This allows teachers to mirror activity from their laptop to their projector.

A full-time Technology Facilitator supports students and teachers in both the technology lab and in classrooms. All students attend weekly classes with our Technology Facilitator. During these class students learn coding, robotics, engineering, technology safety and much more.

Our Library program closely follows the state standards for library science. Our librarian provides a curriculum that develops student's skills through new and creative activities and meets with every class once a week for 45 minutes. With the exception of our K1 class which meets twice a week. During library time students experience the joy of reading in a variety of ways: solo, with friends, and through class read-alouds. Our library also has a Maker Space areas where students challenge themselves to imagine, create, test, and redesign using many different tools and materials during this time.

2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share

We pride ourselves in offering all students a unique and rigorous educational experience. One that they will remember favorably for years to come. As our academic program continues to evolve to ensure fidelity to the mission and vision, we are able to offer several enrichment opportunities for students that make the Banneker school a highly sought-after choice for Cambridge families. Banneker students not only excel academically, they also learn the joy of project collaboration as they work together on dance performances, art shows, concerts and competitions such as the spelling bee or speech. Banneker enrichments extend beyond the building to include exposure to outdoor activities that include skiing, camping, horseback riding and rock climbing. Banneker believes in the development of the whole child, understanding that book knowledge is not enough to give students the exposures needed for future success. As such, we offer many enriching activities that supplement the work happening in our classrooms daily.

We strive to ensure that our academic program meets the needs of all of our students. We pride ourselves on being a STEM school with an excellent Music and Arts Program. Benjamin Banneker hosts many annual events such as a STEAM'S Expo, spaghetti dinner, K1-two performance, fourth grade school musical, Winter Concert, Spring Instrumental Concert, and spelling bee.

In addition to our digital studio and floating lab, we have a one-to-one computer program; we provide MacBook Pros for each student in grades three through six. Graduates are able to purchase their computers for a minimal fee.

Banneker offers monthly parent meetings where various content and topics are covered. We also have Adventure Club which gives our children experiences in hiking, climbing rock, biking, skiing and much more. Banneker Bolts, our cross-country team, participates against other local youths. Many other after school clubs and activities are offered for students from dance to robotics.

Since our doors opened, we have been providing breakfast at no cost to families and starting in the 2015-2016 school year, lunch was also provided at no cost. In addition, all school supplies, including an age appropriate book for new kindergarten students, are provided to parents free of charge.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Every classroom at the Banneker is staffed with a teacher and a teacher associate, allowing the school to reduce the teacher to student ratio. This model provides students with a more individualized instruction and allows all students to make a minimum of a year's academic growth. The curriculum at the Banneker is rigorous and scaffolds from year to year while aligning to the Massachusetts state frameworks. In all content areas we are continuously refining our practice to ensure that students are well prepared to succeed with higher grade level tasks.

At the Banneker we have many approaches to supporting students who are performing below grade level. We have in classroom tiered intervention as well as both ELA and Math intervention. In ELA, we use Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI). This program is a supplementary instructional system for children who struggle in reading and writing. Students meet in a small group with a reading teacher five times per week for a minimum of eighteen weeks. The goal of this intervention is to provide intensive targeted instruction to support struggling readers as they move to grade level competency.

In math we have a Math Interventionist who meets with students one on one, small group or in class support typically to address foundational skills that are hindering students progress. At the end of these programs, all the students who participated typically make significant progress ending either one level below or on grade level. Students are tracked through iReady diagnostics, benchmarks and in class assessments. If needed, some students may be referred for additional services.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

At the Banneker we have many approaches to supporting students who are performing above grade level. Banneker's program authentically provides students with opportunities for accelerated or advanced work. We believe in finding the best path forward for each child. Taking a highly individualized approach to student learning, advanced students are also identified and given the support they need to continue to make accelerated progress at the level they are performing. These supports may be, but are not limited too, small group instruction, individualized computer based instruction, and projects.

3c. Students with disabilities:

At the Benjamin Banneker Charter we provide a variety of services to support all learners. Students on Individualized Education Plans receive specialized instruction according to their level of need and based on their IEP. Student instruction may occur in a partial and completely integrated setting, or one on one, or small groups in designated Learning Centers. Student progress is regularly reviewed and reported to classroom teachers, parents/guardians. The special education team consists of a special education director, special education teachers, an ESL teacher, a school counselor, a speech pathologist, and a consulting psychologist, occupational and physical therapist. The Support Service Team meets regularly to ensure that all students' needs and services are being addressed.

3d. English Language Learners:

The Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School English Language Learner Program of Sheltered English Instruction provides specialized instruction for students according to their level of need. Depending on a student's English language proficiency, the instruction occurs in partial and completely integrated settings. "Sheltered English Immersion" means an English language acquisition process for young children in which all classroom instruction is in English, but with the curriculum and presentation designed for children who are learning the language. Books and instructional materials are in English and all reading, writing, and subject matter are taught in English. Although teachers may use a minimal amount of the child's native language when necessary, no subject matter shall be taught in any language other than English, and children in this program learn to read and write solely in English. Lessons and activities are designed so that the English language development of the student is addressed. In addition, students may participate in an ESL class, where they will receive specific English language instruction in all four language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Student progress is regularly reviewed and reported to parents/guardians.

3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Our community's success is built on relationships. We strive to ensure that every Banneker student feels known and seen; that every student can name at least one adult outside their classroom teacher who they deeply trust. Without the foundation of these strong relationships, nothing else is possible. Students at Banneker are active learners. In class they are encouraged and expected to participate in classroom learning as part of whole group, small group or technology assisted instruction. Exposure to the arts, physical education, music and many after school activities enhance students' social-emotional growth and exposure to the world beyond the school building. Banneker students enjoy many field trips; visits to Museum of Science, Washington DC, and Plimoth Plantation are just a few where they learn to be mentally active, socially involved and globally aware.

Students in grades three to six also have multiple opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities. One example is Adventure Club. Beginning in 2007, Benjamin Banneker Charter School created Adventure Club to engage our students in some outdoor winter activities. Since the inception of this program, we have continued to expand our activities to engage more fully with our New England natural world. Additionally, the program enforces the importance of academic rigor. This year, we plan to host five trips for our students in grades five and six which included hiking, indoor rock climbing, and kayaking.

Another example is Banneker Beat – Dance Troupe. The Banneker Beats is a cross grade level dance troupe that performs for students and parents during day and evening school assemblies, as well as off campus venues. Even though the COVID pandemic halted public performances, it did not stop their passion for learning dance. Students still managed to practice and shared their development using FaceTime, Google Meets and Zoom. Students are taught, exposed and expected to perform different types of dance genres from Tap, Jazz, Hip Hop, Modern and Ballet.

While learning dance, students are given several mini lessons about the history of the dance they are currently perfecting. Because our school is culturally aware, students learn about a variety of culturally representative musicians and dancers such as Cab Calloway and the Nicholas Brothers, James Brown and Misty Copeland. They are also exposed to Africana, Caribbean and Latin dance influences.

Banneker Band: There are many Banneker teachers and staff that are musicians and share their passion for music with students. Each year students in grades four to six are given the opportunity to receive instrumental lessons during the day. At the end of the year they showcase their learning during a spring concert.

Banneker Bolts – Track Team: The mission of the Banneker Bolts Cross Country team is to provide an experience that will encourage each athlete to strengthen their competitive spirit and nurture their desire for success in all aspects of life. Participation in running can help build self-esteem and confidence. It can motivate children to excel academically and help build social and coping skills. Participation also teaches children the benefits of goal setting and practice. It teaches them that healthy living will only help enhance their lives as they move forward.

Nature's Classroom: Banneker takes the fifth grade to Groton, MA for a unique experience. Nature's classroom allows students to study and experience things that are not typically available throughout the academic year. As a residential field trip program that prioritizes experiential learning, it adopts a holistic learning philosophy and encourages students' social and personal development in addition to their academic advancement. Students at Nature's Classroom gain a feeling of belonging, self-assurance, and respect for others that they take back to their school community after living and studying together there. A visit to Nature's Classroom, Inc. offers visitors a unique human experience in addition to environmental instruction.

Washington DC trip: Banneker sixth graders visit Washington DC annually. Our history and social science curriculum's main goal is to provide students with the information and skills they need to participate

thoughtfully and actively in a democratic society and a complex world. Every year, sixth graders from Banneker go to Washington, D.C., where they do research and participate in civic and government-related activities. Students will see original democratic papers while touring sites that help them develop a greater understanding of the U.S. government's history, structure, goals, and procedures, as well as significant figures in that history. By visiting diverse museums that cover subjects like the Holocaust and African-American history, they will acquire a more visceral and intellectual understanding of civics as well as the historical foundations of the United States.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Banneker is a small, tight-knit community that brings families together to foster student growth and development. Our educators work closely with parents as partners in the education of their children. In addition to weekly newsletters and monthly parent meetings, the school hosts many events throughout the year that showcase students' successes socially, artistically and academically. Children as early as K1 participate in several writers' celebrations where the community is invited to read students' published writing. The school prides itself for the "Open Door Policy" where parents are always welcomed in classrooms. Parents are able to participate in numerous events with their students and are often entertained by outstanding dance, music and art shows where student work is showcased. Communication between parents and teachers is respectful and collaborative, with a recognition for the role that parents, family and ancestry play in the future success of the student. Our parents know we are invested in their children. When mothers and fathers walk through our building, they see welcoming faces who look like them. Not only in the cafeteria, but in the classrooms and among the school's small leadership team.

These close relationships, rooted in a shared commitment to educating children to achieve excellence, have allowed our school to close the achievement gap and perform at levels of excellence that too many silently believe are unattainable for students of color. Banneker takes great pride in its strong relationships with parents and the community. The school provides ongoing parent meetings and training on topics ranging from digital awareness to nutrition.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Providing teachers with the support they need enables them to provide the support that the students need. We're constantly focused on our classroom teachers' professional development to ensure they have the skills and resources to reach each and every one of the diverse learners in their classrooms. Banneker's professional development occurs in multiple forms. We have "whole school" professional development where our teachers study a specific element for three years. Additionally, all teachers receive coaching from instructional experts. We have mathematics, science, and literacy coaches on staff full-time; they are our in-the-moment problem solvers.

Every classroom at Banneker has two teachers – a lead teacher and an associate teacher – who are in the classroom full-time. Associate teachers are provided with deep support to grow into lead teachers. They participate in the same professional development as the lead teachers and benefit from intensive coaching and mentoring from their partner lead teachers. This creates a sustainable model for our staff, who approach instruction as a true team effort. In addition, our development program for aspiring teachers helps us find diverse candidates and groom and train them over time, ensuring we have a pipeline of talent available who already know the school, the community, the mission, and the dedication required to succeed at Banneker.

When you invest in teachers' needs, you create an environment where they want to stay. At Banneker, we experience minimal teacher turnover, and that even remained true during the pandemic when, across the nation, teachers were leaving the profession in droves.

The school also encourages all teachers to attend external professional development that meets their individual professional needs. New in SY2022, the school launched a tuition reimbursement program that provides tuition reimbursement for job-related educational courses.

4. School Leadership:

The Executive Director serves as principal and superintendent of the school. The responsibilities of the Executive Director include making decisions around budget and finance, staffing, teaching and learning, federal and local government compliance and the general operations of the school. Given the complexity of the responsibilities of the Executive Director, the school has adopted a shared leadership model. The school leadership is shared by five individuals who are singularly focused on the mission of excellence for all students. In addition to effectively communicating the mission and vision of the school to all stakeholders, the school's leadership sets the tone of high expectations for students and teachers in an atmosphere of trust and collaboration.

Although the responsibility of teaching and learning falls primarily on the Executive Director, instructional leadership is provided by two literacy coaches, a mathematics coach and a science coordinator. These content area coaches are primarily responsible for instruction, curriculum and assessment. Teaching quality plays a critical role in student achievement, therefore, the instructional leaders are responsible for building teacher capacity by designing and implementing ongoing professional development. The instructional leaders also provide expert support through weekly coaching in order to help teachers develop skills that will directly enhance classroom instruction and improve outcomes for students.

In addition, the standards-based curriculum is internally designed by the content area coaches and tailored to the unique teaching and learning needs of the school with oversight from the Executive Director. In order to ensure that every student has the ability to access the intended curriculum, the instructional leaders provide a variety of high-quality resources to support the implementation of the curriculum in a manner that allows for flexibility and teacher autonomy.

The instructional leadership also manages the school's well-established systematic mechanisms for monitoring students' performance and progress over time. Students' progress is monitored frequently using various summative and formative assessments. Student assessments are scheduled and analyzed by content area coaches and discussed regularly with teachers and the Executive Director, in order to inform classroom instruction as well as the curriculum

While formal teacher evaluations are done by the Executive Director, regular informal observations are conducted by the instructional team in order to maintain the collegial nature of teacher feedback and support.

The school Leadership Team generally meets weekly to discuss issues related to the progress of the school's program and the wellbeing of staff and students. The Leadership Team also meets with teacher/cluster leaders monthly, who give voice to the concerns and serve as a liaison between teachers and leadership. There are four teacher leaders who represent the following clusters: grades K-2, grades three to six, Support Staff and specialists.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

We believe that every student is a unique and talented individual who can and will learn when provided with a rich curriculum, engaging student-centric environment, high quality teachers, and a culture of high expectations and social-emotional support. Over the last 25 years Banneker has evolved and developed a framework for the delivery of instruction that engages the students as active participants in their own learning. Our educators recognize that active participation in the process of learning creates life-long learners able to apply their knowledge to the challenges they will face in their lives and careers. Our curriculum is agile, continuously improving and aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

Culturally Responsive Instruction/Social Emotional Learning professional learning communities (PLCs) the name given to teachers' collaborative professional learning,—has become so overused that the term's meaning is often lost. Only when teachers reflect on their instructional practice, consider the effect instruction has on students, and implement insights gained from a meeting to improve their teaching performance, can this process be called a professional learning community. Its goals are to improve classroom instruction and student achievement, honor and empower teachers and their intelligence, and foster and encourage collaboration and risk-taking.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

At the Banneker, it has always been difficult to identify one practice that has been the most impactful. We have always had a hard time identifying what is in the "secret sauce." We believe that there are many elements that all conspire, work together, to make our school so special. We believe that if you asked any member of our community "what one element or practice makes us unique?" answers would vary from strong curriculum, to passionate staff, to high standards, to supportive leadership. One of the pillars of Banneker's success is our commitment to developing the whole teacher.

Staff development is a contributing factor to the schools overall success. At the Banneker, there are many layers to how we provide professional development and support teacher growth. Our overarching professional development goal is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a climate at the school that promotes safety, civil communication, and celebration of our differences.

One of our core initiatives is the Banneker Coaching Model. This model provides both horizontal and vertical alignment of our curriculum, assessment design and data analysis, PD workshop, and coaching cycle. Banneker's educators participate in ongoing professional development, where data and feedback are embedded into the weekly routine of teachers and staff. A yearly professional development calendar is one of the many elements provided in support of teachers and their development. Ongoing teacher training, and continuous improvement of curriculum enhances the craft of teaching and learning. Banneker has created an environment where teachers are encouraged to be innovative, creative, and imaginative.

Teachers feedback is another way that the school shifts a teacher's practice and highlights effective teaching practices. Based on the Banneker's Teaching and Learning Framework (TLF) document and checklist teachers receive feedback documented in TeachPoint, an online evaluation tool that provides teachers with immediate feedback. This online platform also allows teachers to provide evidence that supports meeting their SMART Goals. Members of the Curriculum and Instructional Support (CIS) Team (content area coaches) conduct weekly informal teacher observations. When these observations indicate a need, the Executive Director and the CIS Team create an action plan with the teacher, recommending professional development and provide structured coaching support. The formal evaluation process is completed using TeachPoint and includes a self-reflection, a formal observation by the Executive Director and a review of the year's feedback.

As previously discussed, identifying one practice that is most instrumental is a challenge because as a community we recognize that is it all the intricate parts the makes the Banneker whole!