

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Betty Wheeler Classical Jr. Academy  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 5031 Potomac Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City St Louis State MO Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 63139-1316

County St. Louis City

Telephone (314) 353-8875 Fax (314) 351-0441

Web site/URL <https://www.slps.org/cja> E-mail Steven-Kyle.Jefferson@slps.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. Keisha Scarlett E-mail keisha.scarlett@slps.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name St. Louis City Tel. (314) 231-3720

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 Ms. Antoinette Cousins  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

## PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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The 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

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**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):
- 42 Elementary schools (includes K-8)  
8 Middle/Junior high schools  
15 High schools  
0 K-12 schools
- 65 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	11
K	12
1	30
2	33
3	41
4	46
5	60
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	233

\*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
  - 10 % Asian
  - 30 % Black or African American
  - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 57 % White
  - 0 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2021 - 2022 school year: 7%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	7
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	12
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	19
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	273
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

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

Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Tagalog, Bosnian, Tamil, Hindi, Greek

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %  
4 Total number ELL

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

Total number students who qualify: 233

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 2 %  
Total number of students served 5

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>2</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>0</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>3</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: 2

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 4

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	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	13
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	1
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 18:1

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	95%	98%	97%	97%	97%
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 X No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2015

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

Our mission is to meet the academic and affective needs of gifted and talented students so that they are able to apply complex, creative, and innovative thinking to real world problems.

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

<https://www.slps.org/domain/17051>

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

Students scoring 90th percentile or higher on intelligence and 80th percentile or higher on an academic test are eligible to enroll at Betty Wheeler CJA. All second-grade students in the district who have not already been identified as gifted are universally screened with the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test as an equitable approach to ensure populations that have been traditionally underrepresented in gifted education have an opportunity to be identified at an early age. Students who score in the 90th percentile or above will be recommended to take the cognitive and academic assessments for gifted eligibility. If more students apply to attend Betty Wheeler CJA than we have space for, potential students will participate in a lottery in which they will be ranked as accepted or put on a waitlist.

## PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

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Betty Wheeler Classical Junior Academy (CJA) is a full-time, tuition-free gifted and talented magnet school located just south of "The Hill," a historic Italian neighborhood in St. Louis, MO. Built in 1928 and dedicated in 1930, our school served as a Junior Naval ROTC Middle School and high school, and as a centralized pupil personnel services facility. After serving thousands of students and their families for more than five decades, our school closed in 1989 and reopened in 1990 as an elementary gifted and talented magnet school as part of the magnet schools system tied to the city's desegregation plan.

In 2022, parents, alumni, staff, and community members worked together to change our school's name from Kennard Classical Junior Academy to Betty Wheeler Classical Junior Academy to better reflect our pride in being part of the diverse and inclusive school that exists today. Alumni of Enright CJA and Metro High School wrote in a nomination letter, "Betty Wheeler dedicated her life to excellence in education, particularly in the St. Louis Public Schools. After teaching at Gundlach Elementary, the Northside Reading Clinic, and Yeatman Elementary, she started Metro High School."

Our diverse student population consists of urban and suburban students from a wide range of cultures, ethnic backgrounds, and socio-economic groups. Student acceptance to Betty Wheeler CJA is based on the state criteria for gifted identification as well as Saint Louis Public Schools' criteria for magnet school placement. Our teaching staff is made up of highly-qualified teachers who challenge and support our students in order to fully develop their abilities.

Betty Wheeler CJA's vision is to provide a unique, safe, and nurturing school fostering academic achievement and serving the diverse population of gifted and talented students. We provide a student-centered, inquiry-based gifted curriculum designed to develop creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Students follow the curriculum standards and use materials one grade level above their actual grade in English language arts, mathematics, and social studies. Our consistently exceptional achievement data shows that we are on the right track to achieving our vision by supporting students who are either struggling or exceeding expectations in their core content areas. Our students have divergent learning needs that require not only a special curriculum but also specialized staff and resources to implement the curriculum with fidelity.

Betty Wheeler Tiger Pride is reflected throughout the school. Brightly colored murals painted by students, teachers, and parents serve as teaching tools. A day at Betty Wheeler CJA may include students hanging posters to promote a service learning project, students collecting cans for our annual food drive, students working as a group to make a video demonstrating good character for our weekly school-wide assembly, primary and intermediate classes paired together for a Buddy Day activity, parents and other community members sharing information about the work they do for Career Day, and curriculum specialists meeting with classroom teachers. Evenings and weekends reflect our school and community working together. Volunteers conduct book fairs, school dances, sports programs, scouting activities, robotics club, chess club, book club, math club, literacy night, and school beautification.

As a school, we focus on empathy, integrity, honesty, respect, responsibility, and kindness. These are essential skills needed to become leaders for our classrooms, schools, and future endeavors. We use SOUL as our Character Education program. SOUL stands for Selflessness, Ownership, and Unity, for a Larger purpose. We have SOUL Houses, which are cross-grade level groups that met to create games for our SOUL Carnival that raised money for the Leukemia Foundation.

Students can also take leadership roles in our school community through SOUL Patrol, Student Council, and National Elementary Honor Society. This allows them a greater voice in the academic and socio-emotional initiatives at Betty Wheeler CJA.

Our school's motto, "I'll strive for excellence in all that I do. I'll be the best me, and you be the best you!" together with a dedicated character-building initiative provide a united effort among school, home, and community. As a past recipient of the National Blue Ribbon Award in 2015, we have experienced an



increase in interest in our learning community. We continue to strive each day to sustain excellence in both academics and character development. We have been inspired to achieve additional honors such as becoming a State School of Character in 2022.

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

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

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

Betty Wheeler CJA's curriculum framework aligns with the Missouri Learning Standards and the National Association of the Gifted Child Gifted Education Programming Standards. Our district follows the Science of Reading approach to literacy. Instructional materials for the school district are selected by teacher-led curriculum teams. Instruction is accelerated by one grade level.

The primary grade curriculum builds upon skills established during pre-kindergarten. Using Science of Reading strategies, students receive direct, explicit instruction in reading and writing. Students strengthen reading and comprehension skills through Readers' Workshop. Phonics are explicitly taught and practiced using decodable texts. Students learn vocabulary, complex comprehension, compare and contrast, cause and effect, and main idea and supporting details. Primary students use the writing process to organize research, write opinion pieces, explanatory texts, and narratives with standard conventions. By the end of second grade, students are publishing multi-paragraph informational texts.

The building blocks of the primary years lead to increased rigor and enrichment during the intermediate years. In third, fourth, and fifth grade, students use reading comprehension skills such as summarizing, comparing and contrasting texts, making inferences, drawing conclusions, and paraphrasing to read and understand high-level instructional texts, stories, dramas, poetry, fables, and myths. The writing curriculum in intermediate grades provides opportunities for greater complexity and real-life applications. Students continue to use the writing process to develop and hone opinion pieces, narratives, informative texts, and research projects. The Writers' Workshop program helps students develop well-organized, interesting, easy-to-read writing pieces.

We provide English language arts enrichment opportunities in the form of after-school book clubs, student journalists writing a school newspaper, students writing and creating character education videos for our weekly assemblies, and Springboard enrichment classes in storytelling and drama.

During Professional Learning Community (PLC) team meetings, grade-level teams work together to create Common Formative Assessments (CFAs) and rubrics. Students also take district-created CFAs at the beginning of each quarter and Common Summative Assessments (CSAs) at the end of each quarter to assess student growth on essential standards identified by our district English language arts curriculum specialist. We measure student growth in reading by taking Star assessments three times a year. We use this data to determine which standards need to be given more class instructional time, and which students need further instructional support or enrichment.

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

Our school's curriculum framework aligns with the Missouri Learning Standards and the National Association of the Gifted Child Gifted Education Programming Standards. Instructional materials for the school district are selected by teacher-led curriculum teams. Instruction is accelerated by one grade level.

Primary grade math progresses from single-digit addition and subtraction to multiplication and division by the end of second grade. At each grade level, students gain a critical understanding of place value, measurement, telling time, representing and interpreting data, shapes and their attributes, and problem-solving. Second-grade students play Equate Math, a game in which students write their own equations.

Mathematics in the intermediate grades includes the studies of operations, fractions, measurement and data, geometry, mathematical problem solving, probability, decimals, measurement, and graphing coordinates. Students in third, fourth, and fifth grade participate in weekly math Equations lessons and compete in Equations tournaments and math enrichment lessons that include critical thinking and problem-solving.

Teachers in all grade levels use a combination of strategies to teach math. These include small group and individual instruction. The use of technology has allowed new avenues in mathematics instruction as well. Our school is 1:1 with student technology. This allows classrooms to access online texts and lessons as well as instructional videos. It helps us better tailor individual instructional needs. This includes providing support where needed as well as allowing students who have mastered the material to go deeper.

Betty Wheeler CJA also has a math club that meets weekly where students can come to learn new math strategies and participate in a national math contest. It consists of mostly third through fifth graders but also includes several students from second grade.

During Professional Learning Community (PLC) team meetings, grade-level teams work together to create CFAs and rubrics. Students also take district-created CFAs at the beginning of each quarter and CSAs at the end of each quarter to assess student growth on essential standards identified by our district mathematics curriculum specialist. We measure student growth in mathematics by taking Star assessments three times a year. We use this data to determine which standards need to be given more class instructional time, and which students need further instructional support or enrichment.

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

Our school's curriculum framework aligns with the Missouri Learning Standards and the National Association of the Gifted Child Gifted Education Programming Standards. Instructional materials for the school district are selected by teacher-led curriculum teams.

We have a full-time science lab teacher. In the science lab, students learn about life and earth sciences with the help of the school garden and the plants and animals that grow and live there. Some of the life science units include topics on the parts of a plant, pollinators, seed dispersion, decomposers, ecosystems, weather, and erosion.

Physical science units include topics such as pushes and pulls, energy, forces and interactions, and matter and its properties. Projects include making wind turbines, weather tools, and chain reactions.

Students make sense of scientific phenomena through observations and explorations. They design investigations to learn the laws of science and then apply their knowledge to solve problems with engineering design processes.

During Professional Learning Community (PLC) team meetings, grade-level teams work together to create Common Formative Assessments (CFAs) and rubrics. Students also take district-created CFAs at the beginning of each quarter and Common Summative Assessments (CSAs) at the end of each quarter to assess student growth on essential standards identified by our district science curriculum specialist. We use this data to determine which standards need to be given more class instructional time, and which students need further instructional support or enrichment.

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

Our school's curriculum framework aligns with the Missouri Learning Standards and the National Association of the Gifted Child Gifted Education Programming Standards. Instructional materials for the school district are selected by teacher-led curriculum teams. Instruction is accelerated by one grade level.

Historical fiction, non-fiction, media, class discussions, and project-based learning are used to explore social studies topics including economic supply and demand, goods and products, consumers, producers, resources, supply, and demand, government branches, Declaration of Independence, Constitution, Bill of Rights, exploration, early settlements, westward expansion, how people adapt to their environment, map skills, geographic features, and ancient civilizations.

Students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade learn about economics during classes with Junior

Achievement volunteers from our community. Fifth graders also participate in Junior Achievements' BizTown which is a program that combines in-class learning with a day-long visit to a simulated town that allows students to operate banks, manage restaurants, write checks, and vote for mayor.

During Professional Learning Community (PLC) team meetings, grade-level teams work together to create Common Formative Assessments (CFAs) and rubrics. Students also take district-created CFAs at the beginning of each quarter and Common Summative Assessments (CSAs) at the end of each quarter to assess student growth on essential standards identified by our district social studies curriculum specialist. We use this data to determine which standards need to be given more class instructional time, and which students need further instructional support or enrichment.

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

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

The pre-kindergarten curriculum emphasizes conceptually challenging, in-depth, and complex content within cognitive, affective, aesthetic, social, and leadership domains as recommended by the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) 2010 Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards. Content-based acceleration and project-based learning experiences are offered to support our high-ability learners.

Students work on alphabetic awareness, phonetic sounds, and blending through mini-lessons and daily practice in centers. In the writer's workshop, students transition from using pictures to tell a story, to adding labels and sentences by the end of the year. Students work on developmental writing skills such as holding a pencil correctly, directionality, inventive spelling, and writing a complete sentence using the correct capitalization and punctuation.

In Science, students work on units of study via learning experiences based on each season. Students will explore and have hands-on experiences with weather and seasonal changes, animals and their habitat, life cycles, plants, and the five senses.

Social Studies units of study include manners, feelings, family and friends, community helpers, conflict resolution, rules, our country, and learning about the various holidays throughout the year.

Students learn counting and cardinality. They know number names and their count sequence. They can count to 100 by the 100th day of school. Students learn operations and algebraic thinking through addition and subtraction. They work to gain foundations for place value.

They can classify objects and count the number of objects in each category. In geometry, they identify and describe shapes as well as compare, create, and compose shapes. Students learn to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.

Pre-kindergarten students use technology to support the 21st Century learning goals with one-to-one iPad technology. Students use technology to enrich Math and Reading skills using applications such as Starfall, Brain Pop Jr, Nearpod, and Storyline Online.

Students completing pre-kindergarten at Betty Wheeler CJA are well prepared for our accelerated kindergarten program.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

**2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)**

All students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade receive 60 minutes per week of both music and visual arts instruction.

Our music curriculum is used to foster a sense of appreciation and understanding of music. Students demonstrate an understanding of the basic music concepts by singing, playing instruments, and dancing. Students also learn to compose their own songs. The fifth-grade class performs a musical each year. Students choose the types of performances they would like to present, what message they would like to articulate, and the repertoire.

The visual arts curriculum develops appreciation and understanding of art. Students learn to use available resources, tools, and technologies safely to engage in creative art-making. They build an array of skills in various media as they paint, sculpt, draw, and create mixed media and collages utilizing the elements of art and principles of design. Students regularly analyze, explain, and interpret art and its message. Whenever there is a natural connection, science, social studies, math, and communication arts are incorporated into the project.

## **2b. Physical education/health/nutrition**

All students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade receive 60 minutes per week of physical education instruction.

Developmentally appropriate activities enhance students' quality of life through setting healthy goals, and modeling/encouraging an active lifestyle. Fitness is measured by yearly pre and post-assessments for third, fourth, and fifth graders. Activities develop basic locomotor, manipulative, and dancing skills, cardiovascular endurance, and muscular strength and endurance. Critical thinking, health objectives, and vocabulary are taught to all pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade students for one hour per week. The physical education program provides enrichment activities and character development through community-sponsored programs such as Girls on the Run, Kids Heart Challenge, and our annual field day.

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

All students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade receive 60 minutes per week of Spanish instruction.

Spanish classes build on grammar, vocabulary, geography, and culture through cooperative and inquiry-based learning, supporting cross-curricular education in English language arts, social studies, history, and gifted curriculum standards. Our scholars converse in Spanish in a variety of contexts and create stories in Spanish using Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling. We use technology including IXL, Duolingo, and Nearpod. Students engage in authentic learning including writing Spanish menus and travel brochures. We learn about the cultural traditions and celebrations of many different Spanish-speaking countries.

## **2d. Technology/library/media**

Technology is integrated throughout instruction. Each student has an iPad for educational use both at school and at home. All classrooms are equipped with Smartboards. Students receive computer science, robotics instruction and hands-on activities during their science lab time using Lego Education, Scratch Jr., Tynker, and Wonder for Dash and Dot.

All students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade receive 30 minutes per week of library instruction. The Betty Wheeler CJA library focuses on essential skills that include strategies to help students successfully find relevant and authoritative information needed for research. The library also focuses on skills essential to be an effective user of the library and promotes the appreciation of literature. These skills are taught through lessons on using technology to navigate the library system, assisting with class research while incorporating appropriate research skills, reading aloud, book talks, and introducing all genres of literature. Library lessons begin with pre-kindergarten and continue to fifth grade having visits once a week.

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

### **3. Academic Supports**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level:**

Classrooms at Betty Wheeler use a flexible grouping of students based on individual instructional needs. Students work in small groups and one-on-one with teachers throughout the day. Small group intervention lessons focus on reteaching students who have not demonstrated mastery of specific skills on classroom and district-wide assessments. Student progress is monitored through observation, formative assessments, and student input to determine which students require further support. Specialist teachers and paraprofessionals offer both push-in and pull-out support working with small groups and individual students.

We also make accommodations on the number of math problems assigned, the length of a written assignment, and extended time completing projects. Students are able to use choice methods to demonstrate mastery of the material. Learning contracts developed with input from the student and parent are used for students who struggle with completing work on time. Teachers communicate with parents about specific skill deficit areas that require more practice.

#### **3b. Students performing above grade level:**

Our school's curriculum is accelerated by one grade level in English language arts, mathematics, and social studies. Teachers replace content students know with new content, enrichment options, or other activities. We value project-based learning that involves real-life situations. For example, fourth-grade students practice measurement and data analysis using pumpkins. Fifth graders learn about the circular flow of economics in a simulated community while operating businesses at Junior Achievement's BizTown.

We have an advanced math class for fifth-grade students that is accelerated by two grade levels. Our district-provided curriculum materials include enrichment activities and projects for students who benefit from an extra challenge.

Students' creative problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and leadership skills flourish when they participate in the following enrichment activities: chess, academic and artistic contests, robotics, coding, Equations, book club, field trips, team building activities at Camp Wyman, newspaper, creating character education videos, Springboard programs in storytelling, puppetry, songwriting, and drama, student council, and National Junior Elementary Honor Society.

#### **3c. Students with disabilities:**

Special Education Services work both in and out of the general education classroom, with a strong emphasis on pushing into the classroom as we aim to be sure all students participate in the least restrictive environment. The resource teacher often pushes into classes with students to work in small groups or one-on-one with students in areas of struggle.

There are several interventions and strategies put in place, depending on student needs as specified in their Individual Education Plan (IEP). The general education teachers and resource teachers collaborate and communicate frequently throughout each week to check in on student progress. If an intervention is not working for a student's goal, they work together to try to plan new strategies so the students will have continual progress.

Special Education Services also completes progress reports every 5 weeks, along with the general education classrooms' progress reports. This not only keeps up with consistent progress monitoring of IEP goals but promotes frequent communication with parents to update them about their student's IEP.

**3d. English Language Learners:**

All of our students identified as English Language Learners have demonstrated English Fluency on the WIDA exam and do not receive services.

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

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

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

Our academic culture is fostered and improved by a dedication to democratic classrooms and strong parent involvement. Students take part in creating rules and expectations in the classroom and have a strong input in academic directions throughout the year. Instruction is guided by the individual and exceptional needs of our student population. Students gain a sense of self-confidence and empowerment.

We use teacher-developed belonging surveys and district Panorama culture and climate surveys to get feedback from our students. Through the use of these surveys, we added live plants around the building, instituted dance music Fridays, and decorated our school with a sensory hallway and affirmations.

Our core values of respect, responsibility, honesty, and kindness were determined through a selection and voting process by our staff, families, and students. We use a team-building philosophy created by Super Bowl-winning coach Tony Dungy called SOUL (Selflessness, Ownership, and Unity for a Larger purpose) as a framework for our character education program. Each grade level takes turns creating our character lesson video of the week. Students worked in mixed grade-level SOUL families to build carnival-type games to raise money for the Leukemia Foundation.

Students have many opportunities for leadership and service in each grade level. Kindergarteners bring the Tuesday Treats with Tiny Humans cart around one Tuesday a month with treats for teachers donated by parents. First-grade students organize a pajama drive. Second graders take care of all of the plants in the hallways and stairwells. Third-grade students collect the recycling from each classroom on Fridays. Fourth graders participate in a service learning project to collect coats. Fifth-grade students tutor younger students in mathematics and reading.

Students in the National Junior Honor Society volunteer as peer tutors and participate in service learning projects. Student Council members organized a canned food drive and are responsible for bringing their class wants and needs to the school leadership committee. SOUL Patrol members give ideas and input for character education activities.

Our students have the opportunity to participate in many field trips to the art museum, zoo, botanical garden, science center, space exploration center, children's museum, and fifth-grade camp. Enrichment opportunities include chess, academic and artistic contests, robotics, coding, Equations, book club, field trips, team building activities at Camp Wyman, newspaper, creating character education videos, Springboard programs in storytelling, puppetry, songwriting, and drama.

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

Betty Wheeler CJA engages volunteers, families, and community organizations to advocate for their children's education by providing learning opportunities and support to the school. Our school partnered with community groups to offer our students opportunities for service projects. We worked with Operation Food Search to collect and donate 2,277 pounds of non-perishable food. Students helped a local women's shelter, Almost Home, by collecting and donating 30 pairs of new pajamas. Our families also donated approximately 100 coats to children in our school district who needed them this winter.

Our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) organizes social events for our staff and families to come together including a new family picnic, summer play dates at local parks, grandparents and special friends day, a school dance, Trunk-or-Treat, and an end-of-year picnic. Parents also volunteer to assist with school beautification, class parties, chaperoning field trips, fifth-grade camp, field day, literacy night, and our character education SOUL Carnival. Through fundraising, our PTO provides enrichment programs for each teacher's classroom, books for the library and classrooms, technology including Smartboards and online educational resources, assemblies, and field trips. A variety of parent-led organizations including Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Girls on the Run, and sports teams provide opportunities for students to participate in



the community.

Public librarians from our community visit our school to read to students and share information about their services. Speakers from our families and community with careers in a wide range of fields including firefighting, architecture, map making, lobbying, education, medicine, and finance share information about the work they do during our annual career day. Volunteers from NISA Investment Advisors shared their economic and business knowledge and experience with our students by teaching Junior Achievement lessons two mornings in each classroom. St. Louis Chess Club provides chess instructors for weekly chess instruction during the school day and an after-school chess club. Each year we also partner with Springboard to Learning, a community organization that develops children's abilities to think critically, create, collaborate, and communicate through in-class residencies in storytelling, puppetry, songwriting, and drama.

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

Every staff meeting at Betty Wheeler CJA ends with celebrations. Together, teachers celebrate triumphs within their classroom, throughout the school, and in their personal lives. This exercise every month reflects the positive school climate that is pervasive at our school. Staff is truly happy to support each other in school and life. Staff is regularly supported through our Courtesy Committee. Its vision is to establish courtesy, cheer, and acknowledge special life moments throughout our professional learning community. We do this through providing special treats (edible and non-edible), providing pick-me-ups like "Way to Go Wednesday" emails, planning in and out of school activities, celebrating professional achievements, celebrating special life changes, and even honoring the loss/illness of our loved ones. Our dedication to a positive environment spurs students and staff to reach even greater heights.

Our professional culture is deeply rooted in collaboration and support. According to the results of our 2022 school climate survey, the staff is highly satisfied working at Betty Wheeler. This satisfaction is evident in our staff cooperation. Staff feels supported by a professional environment and collaboration among peers. Teachers feel that they are kept informed of important changes within the school and believe that our school is a safe place. Teachers are also encouraged to share thoughts and ideas with each other and with the administration. They are included in many decisions that affect the school community. This fosters a great sense of belonging and ownership among the staff.

Betty Wheeler CJA is a professional learning community that engages in professional development (PD) and applies that learning to increase student achievement. Our district provides ten days of professional development each year for teachers and support staff. Our leadership team analyzes performance data, identifies learning challenges, and then makes recommendations to determine how to equip educators to address learning and teaching challenges. Our PD team consists of teachers, an administrator, and gifted specialists. We network with civic organizations and university partners to plan and implement differentiated PD. Our PD is developed to improve student learning and outcomes. It occurs in a variety of formal and informal contexts such as peer observations. First and second-year teachers have mentor teachers in our building who guide, lead, and listen to their mentees. Teachers are also encouraged to attend professional development seminars and classes of their choosing. When they return they share what they have learned with the staff and help others implement new ideas and strategies. This allows teachers to stay relevant with new teaching and learning strategies.

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

Student learning and achievement are top priorities in our professional learning community. Together our priorities are to improve attendance, increase reading proficiency, and expand social-emotional learning. Our academic program is tailored to implement effective instruction for gifted students and close the achievement gap. The leadership committee facilitates the implementation of Betty Wheeler CJA's shared mission, vision, and commitments. Its members make many of the schools' recommendations that directly impact our improvement goals of student achievement, attendance, and behavior. We have several school committees that help make leadership decisions. All staff participates in at least two committees that explore issues and seek suggestions for ways of improving our existing school programs.

Our principal provides opportunities for teachers to lead and support him. The principal is highly visible within the learning community and is available to students, staff, and parents. Shared school leadership effectively creates a bridge between all sectors of Betty Wheeler CJA, increasing student achievement, communication, collaboration, and decision-making in our learning community. We have several collaborative programs that involve our leadership team, teachers, and staff. Each staff member participates on a minimum of two committees. The purpose of our school committees is to explore issues and seek suggestions for ways of improving our existing school programs. All committees are led by teachers and support staff leaders. As a professional learning community, we use our teacher “expertise” to improve academic achievement, support a positive school climate and culture, and promote high-quality professional development, and foster community, and parent engagement. Each teacher and support staff educator reviews a list of committees and descriptors each year before they sign up to participate. Our Professional Learning Community/School Improvement/Leadership Team/Tiger Families committees are combined to form the Excellent School Committee. This committee requires a representative from each school team. All staff members are highly encouraged to participate in improving our school. Sub-committees are activated on an as-needed basis.

Betty Wheeler CJA has two gifted specialists that serve as building leaders. They observe and work with a variety of students and teachers so that they can help guide professional development, day to day classroom operations and provide great insight into what can be of value to the homeroom teachers. Each semester student formative assessment data is reviewed. The gifted specialists provide push-in and pull-out support for students that need additional support. Their support schedule changes throughout the school year based on the need of each classroom.

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

We are committed to equity and social justice. Betty Wheeler CJA has an Equity and Inclusion committee made up of parents and staff to help our school become a more diverse and inclusive environment. This year work from the committee led to the renaming of our school in honor of Betty Wheeler, an African-American woman who was a lifelong educator and the founding principal of Metro High School, a high-achieving school in our district. Our previous namesake was a former Confederate Lieutenant in the Civil War before becoming a businessman and benefactor in St. Louis.

All second-grade students in the district who have not already been identified as gifted are universally screened with the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test as an equitable approach to ensure populations that have been traditionally underrepresented in gifted education have an opportunity to be identified at an early age.

All students at our school, regardless of family income, receive a free breakfast and lunch that include fresh fruits and vegetables each day. Our school social worker and counselor build meaningful relationships with students and identify their needs. Our social worker visits families at home to provide support and referrals. Teachers and other staff members identify, recognize, and utilize the cultural strengths of students. We also have a full-time Culture and Climate Coach who leverages Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), social justice and restorative practices, social-emotional learning, trauma-informed practices, and culturally responsive pedagogy to support our students.

Multicultural representation is an important part of selecting textbooks and other curriculum materials for our school district. Betty Wheeler CJA classroom and school libraries include books that celebrate the diversity of many communities. Our Equity and Inclusion committee sponsors an EyeSeeMe book fair at our school each year. EyeSeeMe African American Children's Bookstore, located in our community, offers a diverse selection of culturally inclusive books for all children of all ages, that encourage children to develop respect for those who are different from them. We have an ethnically diverse student population. Parents visit classrooms to share their cultural traditions through games, snacks, and read-alouds.

Students research and learn about the historical contributions of men and women from a variety of cultures. Teachers of the visual and performing arts ensure that they take a multicultural approach in curriculum design when considering whose art to uplift. In the music room, every class begins by listening and discussing together samples of music from a variety of genres, eras, and cultures all around the world. From

traditional Tibetan throat singing to Hadyn and Mozart to local Hip Hop artists, students are learning that just because something is new or different than what we are used to, doesn't mean that it is funny or weird- just a new learning opportunity.

We have high expectations for all of our scholars. Students are given a variety of academic supports including flexible small group lessons, one-on-one and group support for those performing below grade level, and enrichment and advanced classes for those performing above grade level. Our students are given opportunities to practice leadership and responsibility.

We are conscious of making students and their families feel welcome in our school community. Our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) organizes social events for our staff and families to come together including a new family picnic, summer play dates at local parks, grandparents' day, a school dance, Trunk-or-Treat, and an end-of-year picnic. Parents also volunteer to assist with school beautification, class parties, field trips, field day, literacy nights, and our character education SOUL carnival.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE**

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At Betty Wheeler, the strategy we believe that makes us most successful is our SOUL character education program which earned us the State School of Character in 2022. It is also part of our reapplication for the National School of Character which we earned in 2017. SOUL stands for Selflessness, Ownership, and Unity for a Larger purpose and embodies our core values of respect, responsibility, honesty, and kindness. The larger purpose of our character program is to spread peace, love, and kindness in the community. Our SOUL program was created by our staff and includes input and participation from parents, our community, and students.

Our SOUL program gives students leadership opportunities. For example, the SOUL patrol highlights the good actions they see in our school, plans our monthly SOUL assemblies, and offers suggestions for improvement in various areas of our building and learning environment. Fifth graders produce our live Monday Announcements and each grade level has a school-wide responsibility such as recycling.

We create a caring community through service projects and service learning. Students work collaboratively across grade levels (SOUL Houses) creating games from recycled materials for our SOUL carnival benefiting the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, conducting food and coat drives for our needy families and the greater community, and painting rocks with positive messages placed out in the community to spread peace, love, and kindness. SOUL is also used by our National Elementary Honor Society members which offers peer tutoring and buddy read-aloud where upperclassmen visit our early childhood classes to read to them. We use these activities and our SOUL houses to create a caring community, to teach students the importance of building relationships, being selfless, taking ownership, kindness or giving back, and the strength of community.

At Betty Wheeler CJA academics are very important, and we understand the importance of educating the whole child through a positive caring environment. Our SOUL program creates whole-child learning opportunities. We are proud of our SOUL program and feel that it is the one thing that makes us most successful.