

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 [] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Mr. Jeffrey Wilson

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

Official School Name Washington Irving School No 4

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 12 Madonna Place

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Garfield State NJ Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 07026-3628

County Bergen County

Telephone (973) 340-5034

Fax (973) 340-4028

Web site/URL <https://s4.gboe.org/>

E-mail jwilson@gboe.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* Mr. Nicholas Perrapato

E-

mail nlperrapato@gboe.org

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

District Name Garfield

Tel. (973) 340-5000

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mr. Jorge Ramos

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

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

Date _____

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

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

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 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):
- 7 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
1 Middle/Junior high schools
1 High schools
0 K-12 schools
- 9 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	0
K	50
1	55
2	60
3	52
4	50
5	50
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	317

*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
 - 1 % Asian
 - 4 % Black or African American
 - 41 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 51 % White
 - 3 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2021 - 2022 school year: 14%

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	20
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	27
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	47
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	344
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.14
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	14

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Albanian (Gheg, Tosk), Arabic, Cambodian (Khmer), Georgian, Macedonian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Uzbek

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 9 %
30 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 43 %
 Total number students who qualify: 135

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 22 %
Total number of students served 69

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>3</u> Autism	<u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>14</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>26</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>25</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: 4

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 7

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.	16
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	18
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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 20:1

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%	97%	97%	96%	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 ☒

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.

To cultivate a safe and nurturing learning environment where all students are challenged to reach their full potential academically, socially, and emotionally. We strive to instill a love of learning and a sense of responsibility in our students, equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary to become successful and responsible citizens in an ever-changing world.

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

<https://www.straussesmay.com/seportal/Public/DistrictPolicy.aspx?policyid=5750&id=4e3779a5718e46068e2280621741d99d>

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

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Nestled along the bank of the Passaic River in New Jersey lies the great city of Garfield. Originally part of a larger township created in 1737, the city was officially incorporated and named in 1917. The Lenni Lenape Native Americans first occupied the area, which later became settled by Dutch and German farmers. The area was used by both armies regularly during the Revolutionary War, most notably during the Retreat of 1776. During the early 20th century, Garfield was a thriving industrial town focused largely on textile and chemical manufacturing. The booming industrial landscape brought an influx of immigrants from Italy, Poland, Russia, and Hungary, as well as the Slavic States. To help address the rapid growth within the city, Washington Irving School #4 was completed in 1914 and was hyped as the newest and best school in town. A year later, a major fire occurred in the school; fortunately the building was unoccupied at the time, but the resulting damage took two years to repair. The school has been open ever since. In 1939, Garfield earned the nickname “City of Champions” following a high school football National Championship, and the moniker remains in use today. In 2023, the factories are long gone, but the city has recently been experiencing a rebirth, redeveloping into a modern small city.

Washington Irving School #4, known locally as School 4, has faithfully served its diverse population for over 109 years. Over the course of that time, this community has held an enduring belief in the power of education and its ability to open life’s doorways.

At School 4, we challenge our students to reach their full potential by providing a thorough education that prepares them for success in the 21st century. To achieve this goal, we implement a range of strategies that are designed to engage all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities. Starting with a rigorous curriculum aligned to state and national standards, we provide students with a strong foundation in the core subjects of reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. Other courses provided to our students include art, music, physical education, foreign language, and additional science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM)-based instruction, which help students develop creative, physical, and critical-thinking skills.

Our reading and writing curriculum is presented through a balanced literacy approach. We utilize Lucy Calkins’ Reading and Writing Workshops, Fountas and Pinnell Guided Reading and Word Study, and the Wilson Reading Foundations phonics series. We also employ the workshop model in the subject of mathematics, while using GO Math! as our support. When it comes to science and social studies, teachers typically use cross-curricular methods to integrate their lessons. We also have English as a Second Language (ESL), a Reading Specialist, Basic Skills, and special education services to offer to our students who have the need.

Our most valuable educational asset, however, is our wonderfully diverse staff. Our teachers take a very conscientious approach to addressing every student’s individual needs. Staff members at the school speak multiple languages such as Spanish, Polish, Italian, Albanian, and Arabic. We regularly take part in professional development opportunities by attending workshops as well as working alongside math and language arts coaches embedded within the building. Each teacher gets a minimum of twenty hours of development time, but usually accrues much more.

To respond to each child’s individual learning, we follow a Response to Intervention (RTI) program and have adapted it to fit our organization. At the end of each school year, every student is viewed through a universal screening tool that assesses the need of each individual. The results are used to find out exactly where our students excel and where they need further development. Built into each day’s schedule is a period devoted to WINN, which is an acronym for “What I Need Now.” During this daily period, students work on the skills they need to develop, either independently or in groups. All support teachers are utilized during the WINN period to help with the process. Each week during Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings, we discuss the progression and changing needs of each student, and tailor our teaching approaches accordingly.

At School 4, we have three goals. The first is to ensure the safety of everyone who steps on campus, the

second is to always improve academically, and the third is to have fun while we do it! We want our building to be a place where kids want to be. Our approach to social–emotional learning (SEL) helps us create this environment. Our counselor provides in-class lessons as well as individual and group support to our students, and plays an integral part in creating a culture that strips away any obstacles to learning. We have many programs throughout the building that we will explain in further detail; however, including our community is an important step in creating a great school for our students.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

The English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum for grades K–5 is based on the balanced literacy approach. This model was chosen because it granted the teachers the greatest level of autonomy in meeting the needs of each individual student. Students at School 4 are exposed to a wide range of reading texts in their ELA blocks, as well as across the curriculum in science and social studies. Balanced literacy also provides a variety of word study options and grammar elements.

The primary reading curriculum in grades K–5 is taught using Lucy Calkins’ Reading Workshop. In the workshop format, teachers begin their instruction with an interactive read-aloud. Through this read-aloud, teachers can collaboratively build knowledge with their students and expose them to various texts. The second step in the workshop model is the mini-lesson, in which teachers use the “I Do, We Do, You Do” structure. The teacher will read a mentor text to the students and demonstrate the new reading skill. The group will practice this skill before students go off to work independently with a “just right” book of their choosing. Teachers visit with students during this time to check their understanding of the concepts taught.

In conjunction with the Lucy Calkins curriculum, teachers use the Fountas and Pinnell Literacy Guided Reading Program. Using the leveled readers provided by this program, teachers meet with students in small groups, listen to them read a variety of narrative and informational texts, and check their understanding of the content read. This program gives teachers the capability to work with a variety of abilities while focusing on the same learning standards.

Summative assessments used at School 4 include unit tests comprised of both multiple-choice and open-ended questions, benchmark assessments, trimester tests, and guided reading/writing assignments. Formative assessments for the reading curriculum include reading-level assessments and a conferring rubric used during independent reading. The goal of all the assessments and instruction is to not only determine future instruction, but create lifelong readers who are continually challenging themselves and building their reading abilities.

The phonics curriculum is implemented in grades K–3 through the Foundations program, which focuses on the key areas of phonics: phonemic awareness, word study, and high-frequency words. Through this program, students can master letter sounds, spelling patterns, and word meaning. If you were to walk into one of these classrooms, you might notice the use of materials such as tile boards and student whiteboards, as well as “sound walls” and “word walls” showing skills the students have already mastered.

The writing curriculum for K–5 follows Lucy Calkins’ Writing Workshop Units of Study. This program follows the same model as its reading counterpart, in which teachers follow a “I Do, We Do, You Do” approach to teaching writing skills. The curriculum for the school year allows the students to write a fiction, nonfiction, narrative, and unique writing piece at each grade level. Teachers use the writing process as well as the conferring time to assess the students. Final writing submissions are the main formative assessments. This allows teachers to monitor the progress of the students for grade-level writing and grammar standards.

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

The math curriculum content at School 4 is taught through the GO Math! series from Houghton Mifflin. The curriculum alignments and pacing guides implemented for each trimester are built on the New Jersey State Learning Standards for Math (NJSL-S-M) in correspondence with GO Math!. Each grade level is provided with textbooks, as well as consumable workbooks. The teacher's edition provides a pacing guide, differentiated activities, resource books that include reteach, and extended activities for RTI purposes. The series provides an online digital version, entitled Think Central, that students use to complete homework, classwork, and assessments. Think Central is also utilized by teachers for supplemental videos, reviews, and

grade reporting.

In addition to the math curriculum, the district provides a pacing guide for all grade levels. Although GO Math! is the series that we use to supplement our math curriculum, we do not follow the same progression as the textbooks. In the classroom, lessons are taught through a math workshop approach, which includes a mini-lesson as an introduction, workstations for applying knowledge, and reflection on solutions. During the mini-lesson, the teacher will instruct the whole group while creating an anchor chart. The purpose of the anchor chart, which is hung on the wall after the lesson, is to provide the students with a reminder of the instruction in the days after initial instruction. After the initial whole-group instruction, students move into small groups to practice the skill in different ways. While in small groups, students are encouraged to explore the lessons through hands-on station activities using manipulatives and problem-solving techniques. These groups and the activities in these stations are based on student skill level. Our school makes it a goal to embed real-life situations into the math work, not only to help our students learn the many uses of math, but to create interest. Students use math talks to reflect on the many different solutions obtained through the classwork. It is during the small-group time that the teacher meets with students to both instruct them and check their understanding of the concept. Student computers are often used at this point in the math period as well, as a way to integrate technology, differentiate instruction according to the student's personal skill level, and to give the students a different approach to the standards being taught. Typically, the students are directed to Think Central, ST Math, and iXL online programs.

Math assessments can be completed in the text or through the online digital assessment tool that accompanies GO Math!. All texts include mid-chapter review assessments that can be given halfway through each chapter, whether on paper or online. These assessments provide data that is interpreted and used to provide guided differentiated instruction to our students. A thorough review is also presented to all students at the end of each chapter. This review provides detailed examples from the text, including solutions and explanations, to help students prepare for the chapter test. District-created performance tasks are also used to help students develop basic math and critical-thinking skills by solving problems, critiquing errors, and creating data. These performance tasks are inter-disciplinary and typically paired with science. Each homework assignment contains a spiral review section that allows students to revisit previously taught skills for long-term retention. District tests are given at the end of each trimester to guide further instruction toward the achievement of mastery.

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

The elementary science curriculum is an inquiry-based learning approach centered on the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) three-dimensional framework, which supports an in-depth understanding of physical, life, earth, and space science. The curriculum alignments and pacing guides implemented for each trimester are built on the NJSLS in correspondence with the Full Option Science System (FOSS), which is a research-based program that engages students through science and engineering practices and crosscutting concepts.

Instruction is based on an investigative approach that leads to experimentation. Each grade-level teacher receives three modules complete with equipment that students can use to investigate phenomena or solve complex problems. In kindergarten, the topics are Materials and Motion, Trees and Weather, and Animals Two by Two. The first-grade subjects comprise Sound and Light, Air and Weather, and Plants and Animals. The second-grade areas of study involve Solids and Liquids; Pebbles, Sand and Silt; and Insects and Plants. In third grade, the modules focus on Motion and Matter, Water and Climate, and Structures of Life. The fourth-grade concentration is on Energy; Soils, Rocks, and Landforms; and Environments. Fifth-graders learn about Mixtures and Solutions, Earth and Sun, and Living Systems.

FOSS supplies digital and hardcover textbooks, as well as comprehensive digital resources including interactive videos on various concepts, and guidance for the teacher on how to organize and facilitate labs. Students keep science journals in which they collect and organize data, paste graphic organizers, draw, practice using scientific terminology, and write their responses to the module focus questions.

Assessments are administered both at the beginning of each module to determine the students' level of

knowledge and guide instructional practices, as well as at the end of each module; additionally, teachers may assign review questions after each section. At the end of each trimester, students are also given a district assessment that encompasses the subjects covered during that period.

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

At School 4, we take an interdisciplinary approach to social studies, which is written into every part of our curriculum. Social studies is offered to students twice per week, but is often integrated into ELA periods as well, through informational text and writing. The units vary throughout the years. Beginning in kindergarten, the units include History, Government, and Human Rights; Geography, People, and the Environment; Economy, Innovations, and Technology; and History, Culture, and Perspectives. In first grade, the units are My School, My Community; Work in the Community; Looking at Our World; Traditions We Share; Our Past and Present; and History, Culture, and Perspective. In second grade, the units are My Civics, Economics, Geography around the United States, Celebrating Culture, and Our Nation, Past and Present. The third-grade units are My Community, Our Environment, Communities Building Nations, United States Government, Citizenship, A Growing Nation, Working in Our Communities, and Celebrating Our Communities. As the students move into fourth grade, they learn about The Geography of New Jersey, Diversity and Inclusion, The Amistad, The American Revolution and the Country's Early Years, The Civil War, and Immigration into New Jersey. Last, the units in fifth grade are America in the World, Civics and Tolerance, Economics, Financial Literacy, and Active Citizenship.

In order to support the social studies curriculum, teachers call upon the use of multiple digital resources, such as Newsela, Brain Pop, and iXL. Further, students can utilize the school's new media center, as well as classroom libraries to find informational text to support the units. All classes also participate in the celebration and study of Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month, and Women's History Month. During these times and at community events, you can find evidence of student projects throughout the building.

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

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

The arts curriculum presented to the students is based upon visual art, dance, and theater. Our visual arts curriculum includes material such as the elements of art, art history, art interpretation and critique, multicultural/historical art, the exhibiting and preservation of art, and developing personal connections through art. All students in grades K–5 receive art instruction once per week. Student artwork is celebrated and adorns the walls of our school. Students are regularly exposed to each other's artwork, which decorates every event held by the school. Two large events take place each year—a celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, as well as an art showcase held at the town library, where our students' artwork is presented to the community as a whole.

Our dance curriculum is presented during physical education classes in units entitled Creating Movement, Expression through Dance, and Dance Connection and Response. Theater is presented by classroom teachers and encompasses units entitled Creating with Theater, Performing through Theater, and Responding and Connecting with Theater. In 2022, School 4 held a play for the first time in many years, which was a resounding success.

All students at School 4 are given music class one period per week, while our third-graders are given two periods per week. Starting in kindergarten, our students learn about rhythm, tempo, patterns, singing, pitch, tone color, melody, harmony and multicultural traditions. As they move into the third grade, students learn about reading music, interpreting whole and half notes, melody and the staff, beat, and meter. It is also during third grade that students get an extra period of music each week to learn about playing the recorder. In fourth and fifth grades, the students begin learning about composing music, cultural influences, song analysis, and careers in music. Throughout the year at multiple community events, students are able to present their musical skills in the form of concerts.

Beyond the music class that is in all students' schedules, School 4 also offers instrumental classes to our fourth- and fifth-grade students. This program is voluntary, but open to all students in these grades. Students are offered the chance to learn their choice of multiple brass, woodwind, and percussion instruments. Students who participate in this program have a culminating event each year where they play a concert along with students from other schools in the city.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

Each student in School 4 receives a minimum of 180 minutes of physical education and recess each week. Every class has physical education in its schedule twice per week, and recess is connected to the lunch period each day. We realize the importance of exercise and unstructured play in our children's development, so we encourage teachers to also bring their classes out for additional recess. A few years ago, our Home and School Association, along with local businesses and other stakeholders, worked together to raise money to build a playground for our students. Since the project has been completed, you can regularly find students on the playground throughout the day.

Health and Nutrition is taught within the classroom twice per week. In the younger grades, health is taught by the classroom teacher. In the upper grades, the physical education teacher is the health instructor. Our curriculum is aligned with state guidelines and is supported by The Great Body Shop program, with both online and paper-based literature. Our intention with both physical education and health classes is to instill in our students that an active and healthy lifestyle can be defined in many different ways, and to encourage them to define their own fitness goals in a way they can continue throughout their life.

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

At School 4, all students in the building, grades K–5, take Spanish classes once a week for half of the year. Starting in kindergarten and moving through second grade, the units are based on the very basic elements of the language such as the Spanish alphabet, numbers, colors, shapes, greetings and farewells, parts of the body, family members, the classroom/school, and clothing. When the students move into their third- through fifth-grade years, their world continues to expand, as does their Spanish instruction. The units in these upper grades include expressions and interactions, months, seasons, places around town, the market and other stores, adjectives and full sentences, articles, and Hispanic countries. One of our large events each year is our Hispanic Heritage Night, where students present their projects to the community. Some of these projects include dances, songs, dioramas, cooking and other food-preparation presentations, a family cookbook donated by families of the school, and many other wonderful examples of Hispanic heritage.

2d. Technology/library/media

Over the past few years, we have taken major strides in our approach to technology and media. All of our students have been provided with personal devices that is used both at school as well as in their home. Although we believe that there must be a balance between technology usage and traditional learning, we understand that our students must be fully capable in a world increasingly driven by technology. Two years ago, by fundraising and working with the community, we were able to build a brand-new library/media center. It is a room filled with books, a Promethean board, and computers for student and staff use. A part-time Media Specialist supports the media center. In 2022, we also changed our computer room to a new, updated STEAM room, which includes 3D printers, a greenscreen, robotics, new desktop computers, a Promethean board, and much more. We have a dedicated STEAM teacher who comes to co-teach in the

classroom, and another STEAM teacher who works with students in the STEAM lab. All students in the school get a computer class once a week throughout the year. Further, they have a separate STEAM class once a week for half of the year, on top of the STEAM co-teaching class on a three-week rotating basis.

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

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

As briefly explained earlier, School 4 utilizes an RTI system in which each student is viewed through a universal screening tool to find the skills that each individual needs to improve upon. One period a day, four times per week, students are scheduled with a grade-wide WINN period. During that WINN period, all support teachers are available to work with groups of students on particular skills. As determined during our weekly grade-level PLC meeting, each classroom teacher and support teacher will work on a specific skill, and students in need of that skill will move to that group for the period. Students are broken up into three tiers of need: tier 1 students receive classroom interventions, tier 2 students work with either the Reading Specialist or Academic Interventionist, and tier 3 students work with the English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher or special education teacher.

As a school, we work hard to provide excellent tier 1 strategies and interventions to limit the number of students who fall into tier 2, which is often easier said than done. However, once a student arrives in tier 2, the goal is to get that student back into tier 1 after a set time, depending on the program and skill requiring intervention. The students are repeatedly assessed for progress and discussed during PLC meetings. In tier 2, our Reading Specialist utilized the Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention System (LLI), which is an intensive, small-group literacy intervention program. Our Academic Interventionists work in both math and ELA, depending on the specific needs for each grade level. These groups typically do not get larger than five students at a time, which is why effective classroom interventions at the tier 1 level are key to keeping tier 2 groups at a minimum. Students who receive tier 3 supports are guided by Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and ELL curricula.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Students who are performing above grade level are also supported during our WINN periods. Although much of the staff is dedicated to supporting students who are performing below grade level, one staff member oversees challenging the students who are above grade level. We allow the student-to-teacher ratio in this group to be larger because much of the work given to this group is done independently. You will often find students in these groups doing a research project, working with robotics, or creating dioramas. At times, these students will have the opportunity to verbally present their work as a part of the project. These students are also able to utilize different online resources that not only help them find their ability level, but provide work based on their current skills. Some of the available programs are iXL, Study Island, and Think Central. At times, you can also find students who are above grade level working with their peers to aid their learning as well.

Beyond the WINN period each day, high-skill-level students are invited to participate in the Gifts and Talents Program. The students who are accepted into this program are driven by bus to another school within the district. This year, the program's focus is on the different branches of engineering presented through various media and STEAM-based learning experiences. There are units on mechanical engineering, computer engineering, electrical engineering, and civil engineering, along with an introduction to various other engineering fields.

3c. Students with disabilities:

At School 4, we have made it a goal to provide an environment that is as inclusive as possible, while striving to meet the social, emotional, and academic needs of each student. Students in the special education program each have their own IEP to determine a setting in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Each grade level has one or more inclusion classrooms in which an in-class resource teacher (co-teacher) works alongside a regular education teacher and stays with the students throughout the day. These resource teachers provide ELA, math, science, and social studies support to students with an IEP, and modify the general education teacher's lesson plans, assessments, classwork, homework, activities, and/or projects as needed. Our students with this level of IEP are not pulled out, but rather given in-class support for the duration of the day. Our teachers are regularly trained on the many different approaches to co-teaching.

Students who require more academic assistance are placed in a small-class setting with a special education teacher and a paraprofessional. This teacher works with students in small groups based on reading level and mathematical ability. Every lesson is modelled for the students with frequent comprehension check-ins. Math lessons are hands-on and involve the use of manipulatives. Classwork is done with the guidance of the teacher and there are many opportunities for breaks.

We carefully track our students who have IEPs. In addition to being regularly monitored by their general education teacher, their special education teacher, related service providers, and the Child Study Team, each student's progress is also evaluated and discussed in an annual meeting. Documentation, including present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, modifications/accommodations, and goals and objectives, is completed for each student and presented to the parents along with examples of the student's work, so that everyone has a clear picture of the student's progress.

3d. English Language Learners:

Students who enter the school primarily speaking a language other than English may be in need of additional assistance in learning the language, as well as maintaining progress in the regular educational program. School 4 has an ESL program for our ELL students.

In order to determine which students need to be placed in the ESL program, the school will administer an initial language test on the basis of a language survey given to the parents upon enrollment. A letter is then sent home advising the parents of the opportunity for their children to take part in the program; however, they have the right to refuse the services.

Elementary students who qualify for the program will receive one period daily of ESL instruction. The program focuses on developing proficiency in the English language inclusive of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which will help the children acquire the language skills necessary to be successful students and members of society. In addition, the students are taught content-area vocabulary and concepts within the classrooms. Some students that speak certain languages can also qualify for two periods per day of high-intensity classes.

Our Adult Night School ESL program is available to our students' parents who would like to know the English language. Students who are new to our country are also invited to attend our after-school immigrant program.

The goal for our students here at School 4 is to enable ELLs to become competent in the understanding, reading, listening, speaking, and writing of the English language through the development of literacy and academic skills in grade-level content areas.

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

At School 4, we always look to take care of all our students, regardless of their circumstances. We have several supports in place for our low-income and homeless students and their families. Every day, we offer free breakfast to all students, regardless of their lunch status. It is a "grab-and-go" breakfast that they are welcome to take upon entering the building. The students are given time to eat in the classroom as they begin their school day.

We have a district liaison who works with all homeless families that we accommodate. Each family is given basic care packages as needed, and the liaison assists the families in finding any further supports that may be useful to their placement or comfort.

Within the district, we have a program through Care Plus that gives us on-site mental health services. Care Plus works directly with our Guidance Counselors and social workers to provide direct support to our students in a timely manner. Care Plus is also available to provide direct counseling in situations that require emergency responses.

School 4 also works alongside multiple community organizations, including the local Police Benevolent Association (PBA), Veterans of Foreign Wars, YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, Garfield Rotary, and Strangers Helping Strangers community group to provide clothing, food, school supplies, and even holiday presents to families in need.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

School 4 takes pride in creating a student community of EAGLES—an acronym for Eager to learn, Always responsible, Gives respect, Leadership, and Excellent attendance—in an environment that elicits curiosity, optimism, and motivation. To exemplify our school's core beliefs and character traits, each month teachers choose a student in their class to become the Eagle of the Month. This award is presented to a student with the qualities that encompass our EAGLE acronym. The purpose of this award is to foster our students' intrinsic motivation to succeed. Last year, upon returning to the building after previous distance learning, we noticed strong emotional reactions from our students. We took the initiative to create a schoolwide behavioral plan called "Earn Your Wings," a program we continue to use. Students were awarded a feather for behavioral accomplishments, and we displayed all these feathers on our school wall. By the end of the year, all the feathers put together became a visual representation of our student community in the form of beautiful and strong eagle wings. Students had a chance to pose for pictures in front of the display when they had "earned their wings."

Our strength comes from the awareness that our students are faced with obstacles and experiences in their lives that affect the way they learn, react, and feel. A top priority of ours is to create a safe learning environment that fosters each student's unique needs. To support our students' social and emotional growth, we provide weekly groups that are individualized per grade or classroom need. The objective of several of these groups is to make/manage healthy relationships, empower students, promote self-awareness, and create an atmosphere of belonging. One of the most powerful groups we held this past year was Healing Hearts grief recovery, which was a necessity after the onset of COVID-19. Additionally, we support our students' emotional well-being by incorporating schoolwide monthly SEL themes and lessons in the classroom. Our goal is to teach students the skills and tools to cope with daily challenges. Further, we aim to give our students leadership opportunities through student government, a student patrol program, and a yearly contest where they must perform real-life skills.

School 4 places social-emotional well-being at the forefront of our culture. As a school community, we assess not only our students' but our educators' needs. We provide our staff with calming materials as well as a social-emotional professional development opportunity that teaches mindfulness strategies aimed at improving mental health. We also take pride in creating opportunities to be joyful and form core memories, and each year our educators and students look forward to many schoolwide events. Favorite activities include our yearly students-vs.-staff basketball game, Starbooks Cafe (an opportunity to explore new books), Pi Day, Field Day, Fun Day, and our school spirit days. These events highlight our teamwork, leadership, and citizenship skills, the EAGLE way.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

At School 4, we are lucky to have a wonderful community to work alongside. Our families are always very helpful, and local businesses and associations are always willing to do projects with us. Every year, we hold multiple events at the school that are open to the community, such as Hispanic Heritage Night, a Trunk-or-Treat Halloween event, movie nights, book fairs, and musical/theatrical performances. We also offer different programs that families can take part in, such as Family Literacy, Family Math, and the Adult Night School ESL program. Throughout the year, we hold a number of official parent conference days and nights, but are always open to meeting with our families.

We have worked very closely with local associations on projects for the community. For example, this year our students raised funding to refurbish a Revolutionary War monument that was originally built by the students of our school in 1935. For this project, we worked with the Garfield Rotary and the Garfield Events Committee. When building our playground and media center, many local businesses helped us to reach our goal. We also had help from a Girl Scout working on her Gold Award, who collected books for our library!

Other local entities that we have worked closely with include the YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, the PBA,

Care Plus, and Strangers Helping Strangers (a local association that feeds people as needed).

We also partner with local universities. Through these partnerships, we have placed many student teachers in our school, which has been a great learning experience for everyone involved. These universities have also provided us with professional development opportunities, including in-services and embedded “professors in residence” who acted as instructional coaches. These universities have also helped us to find employees and substitute teachers when needed.

In order to improve and maintain attendance standards, we created an Attendance Team in 2017. This committee closely monitors student attendance, but more importantly, creates relationships with the families of students whose attendance is lacking. These very important relationships have not only improved daily attendance and chronic absentee rates, but have brought us closer to our community members. Through conversations, we have been able to discover when a family’s needs affect a child’s schooling, and find solutions to many of these needs, such as providing adequate clothing or school uniforms, providing adequate transportation, or even purchasing alarm clocks. The Attendance Team has done much in the way of creating a bond between school and home.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

We believe that, much like the saying “it takes a village to raise a child,” it takes an entire staff to educate a child. Not too long ago, School 4 staff worked independently from one another. Although there was a strong staff, it was over the past seven years that we have come to realize the benefits of working collaboratively, and have created an environment driven by teamwork. This process started when the school began scheduling weekly meetings among teachers of the same grade level. In these meetings, we found that many of our outcomes differed, and that some simple changes could help us align our practices. One such example is the different ways that we taught students to collect information from math word problems. As a school, we designed the “Eagle math word problem strategy,” made it easily understandable for all grade levels, and put it into practice. As a result, students now only have to learn one way to approach math word problems, rather than learning a new method each year. As these types of activities progressed, the school also began working on vertical articulation projects, with the aim of enabling our students to seamlessly transition between grades.

As we worked together on many of these projects, we found that we were coming together as a team with a goal for the greater good, rather than individual success. We began to realize that many of the teachers had much to offer, and that we can learn from each other. To encourage this learning process, we began to have events called “Pineapple Weeks,” as the pineapple is considered a sign of welcoming. During this week, teachers are invited into each other’s classroom to show off specific skills. Teachers choose to visit different classrooms throughout the week to learn something new from each other on topics ranging from classroom management and organization to instruction styles.

Beyond learning from each other, there are many additional chances to learn within the district and school through professional development. All staff are provided with multiple in-service days throughout the year that offer training in many different areas. We also have brought in ELA, math, and science coaches to collaborate directly with teachers in their classrooms.

4. School Leadership:

At School 4, the Principal is the only full-time administrator in the building. There are, however, two other curriculum supervisors who come to the building on a part-time basis and are a regular part of the daily activities. Although the Principal is responsible for all aspects of the school, the supervisors also participate in teacher observations, PLC meetings, Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS), as well as day-to-day operational support. The Principal is ever-present within the building, attending or running meetings such as PLCs, I&RS, Child Study Team meetings, Data Team meetings, parent association meetings, faculty meetings, community events, and the many committees created to achieve different goals for the building. Further, the Principal regularly meets with teachers throughout the year, including after each classroom observation, during a mid-year check-in, and at the end of the year. During these one-to-one meetings, goals

for both student and personal achievement are developed and discussed, but most importantly, relationships are built between the staff members and the administration.

It is the current administration's goal to be present, visible, and as available as the position will allow. The overriding belief is that the teachers and staff members are expected and believed to be the experts in their craft. The administration is there to provide support and materials in a way that allows the teachers to be the expert. Teachers are granted space to take calculated risks in their approach to education, without the fear of judgement when they fail. This inevitably will create issues to resolve, but it also leads to new and exciting advances. To properly provide support in this endeavor, beyond having an open-door policy, the administrator must be available to help throughout the day as issues arise. The issues must be met in a timely manner with dependable and consistent responses, while encouraging constant improvement.

Beyond academics, the administration believes in the importance of a well-rounded staff member. Teachers must strike a balance between home and school if they are to be as effective as possible while at work. Therefore, it is important for there to be a caring relationship between administration and the staff, driven by genuine interest. When staff members are happy, they are able to give their best to the students.

Overall, our administrative leadership style is characterized by thought, passion, tact, and a balance between decisiveness and shared decision-making.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

School 4 serves a wonderfully diverse population. We like to view ourselves through the analogy of the salad bowl, in which we look to maintain our cultural identities, but we are all together as one. At every turn, we strive to not only acknowledge but celebrate our differences (which we like to call our superpowers). This begins with our culturally responsive and inclusive curricula. We are always updating our curricula to incorporate different perspectives and experiences. We teach about diverse cultures, histories, and about promoting equity and equality.

As with everything within our school, culturally responsive teaching and learning begins with creating a positive and inclusive school culture. Our students must feel safe while they are at school, both physically and emotionally. The creation of this environment begins with our SEL curriculum, which our Guidance Counselor teaches to all classes within the building. We also have many schoolwide behavior-management programs that promote taking care of one another.

In addition to these strategies, we work to provide supports to our staff and families. Our staff is trained each year on topics such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) awareness, anti-bullying measures, school safety, affirmative action, and how to respond to harassment. As for our students and families, we look to provide understanding and support whenever possible to create an environment of equity and equality. While taking into consideration the needs of our families, we have worked out ways for their children to be successful in school, such as creating homework and tardiness flexibility, giving out new uniforms, providing warm clothing, or presenting kits for self-care. We have unfortunately had two instances over the last few years in which students' homes have burned down, and we have worked with local programs to find these students' families new homes and provide them with clothing, furniture, and funding. We engage with our families whenever possible, which gives us insight into their unique circumstances, or cultural or linguistic barriers. Our school communications are sent home in the parents' native languages through a messenger system that translates the original message.

Ultimately, we look to address the diverse needs and backgrounds of both our students and staff. This requires an ongoing commitment from all members of the school community but is a key piece of our success. By providing targeted supports and creating a culturally inclusive culture, we always look to ensure that our students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

Over the last seven years, the school has gone from being in need of targeted support by the state to being nominated as a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. During this time, we have implemented many practices that have blazed a pathway to success. We have changed our approach to the curricula in almost every subject. We have focused on student attendance. SEL has been at the forefront of our approach. Culture has been made a priority. Teachers have been placed where their skill sets match their abilities, allowing them the best possible chance at success, while ineffective teachers have been removed. There has been a switch from large-group instruction to small-group instruction. There have been many technological and facility improvements. These all have been contributing factors to the meteoric improvement of the school. However, if we were to choose one practice that stood out from the rest, it would be our approach to RTI.

As described earlier, the staff meets weekly to discuss individual students' strengths and needs during our PLC meetings. In order to have these conversations, teachers must have in-depth knowledge of every one of their students. It is during these meetings that we break students into groups based on the skills they need to improve. Then, during the WINN period, students are shuffled across the grade to work on their most-needed skill. It is during this WINN period that all support teachers (Reading Specialist, Academic Interventionist, ESL teacher, Guidance Counselor, Speech teacher) are available to offer their assistance. Through this system structured around constant communication, we can build a web of support for each child in our school while still functioning as a single entity.

It must be noted, however, that the most important asset the school has, and the secret ingredient to implementing this instrumental practice, is its teachers. None of the wonderful things named above would be possible without the teachers who run these programs. The administration recognizes that these teachers are the heart of School 4, and gives them full support in their pursuit of success. No program can ever take the place of a conscientious teacher who learns the needs of each student and strives to give them whatever they need. Washington Irving School #4 is "a place where everyone wants to be" because of its wonderful staff.