

2002-2003 No Child Left Behind—Blue Ribbon Schools Program Cover Sheet

Name of Principal: Mr. Michael R. Jones (Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name: Mill Hill School (As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address: 635 Mill Hill Terrace (If address is P.O. Box, also include street address)

Southport, Connecticut 06890-1262 City State Zip Code +4 (9 digits)

Telephone: (203) 255-8320 Fax: (203) 255-8205

Website/URL http://www.fairfield.k12.ct.us/millhill/ Email: rjones2@fairfield.k12.ct.us

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

(Principal's Signature) Date

Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.

Name of Superintendent Dr. Ann Clark (Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Fairfield Public Schools Tel. (203) 255-8309

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

(Superintendent's Signature) Date

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

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

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

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

DISTRICT (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district: 10 Elementary schools
 3 Middle schools
 — Junior high schools
 1 High schools

 14 TOTAL
2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: \$8,378.00

 Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: \$7,669.00

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
 Suburban
 Small city or town in a rural area
 Rural
4. 4 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.
 If fewer than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?
5. Number of students enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total		Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
K	42	50	92		7			
1	41	47	88		8			
2	42	37	79		9			
3	45	47	91		10			
4	33	36	69		11			
5	33	40	73		12			
6					Other			
TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL								493

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the students in the school:
- | | |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| <u>94.1</u> | % White |
| <u>1.0</u> | % Black or African American |
| <u>1.4</u> | % Hispanic or Latino |
| <u>3.5</u> | % Asian/Pacific Islander |
| <u>0</u> | % American Indian/Alaskan Native |

100% Total

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 9.7 %

(This rate includes the total number of students who transferred to or from different schools between October 1 and the end of the school year, divided by the total number of students in the school as of October 1, multiplied by 100.)

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	5
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	43
(3)	Subtotal of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	48
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1	491
(5)	Subtotal in row (3) divided by total in row (4)	0.097
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	9.7

8. Limited English Proficient students in the school: 0 %
0 Total Number Limited English Proficient

Number of languages represented: _____

Specify languages:

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 1.4 %

3 Total Number Students Who Qualify

If this method is not a reasonably accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families or the school does not participate in the federally-supported lunch program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: $\frac{6}{34}$ % Total Number of Students Served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

<u>3</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>8</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>9</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>14</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

Number of Staff

	<u>Full-time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>24</u>	<u>0</u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>11</u>	<u>6</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>9</u>	<u>5</u>
Support staff	<u>6</u>	<u>1</u>
Total number	<u>51</u>	<u>12</u>

12. Student-“classroom teacher” ratio: 20:1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students. The student drop-off rate is the difference between the number of entering students and the number of exiting students from the same cohort. (From the same cohort, subtract the number of exiting students from the number of entering students; divide that number by the number of entering students; multiply by 100 to get the percentage drop-off rate.) Briefly explain in 100 words or fewer any major discrepancy between the dropout rate and the drop-off rate. Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout and drop-off rates.

	2001-2002	2000-2001	1999-2000	1998-1999	1997-1998
Daily student attendance	<u>95.5%</u>	<u>98.5%</u>	<u>97.1%</u>	<u>96.2%</u>	<u>97.4%</u>
Daily teacher attendance	<u>91.69%</u>	<u>91.3%</u>	<u>89.9%</u>	<u>88.1%</u>	<u>90.5%</u>
Teacher turnover rate	<u>7.3%</u>	<u>22.7%</u>	<u>22.7%</u>	<u>No Data</u>	<u>No Data</u>
Student dropout rate	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Student drop-off rate	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>

PART III – SUMMARY

After a ten-year closure, Mill Hill School, in Southport, Connecticut, opened its doors as a new school in September of 1991. Our mission is to lead *all* learners to academic and social maturity, preparing our students by our example and our instruction to be lifelong learners.

We are fortunate to have a beautiful facility with exemplary curricular and technological resources. Strong traditions of excellence have emerged over the last decade that thrive and flourish with each passing year. Traditions characterized by high expectations for student conduct and achievement, respect and value for individuals and their places in the learning process as well as in life, contribute to Mill Hill School's reputation for excellence in the community. Along with experienced staff open to innovation and collaboration, we have a dedicated and supportive parent community and a PTA that provides many opportunities for our students and staff to extend learning. Our students, our most prized natural resource and our hope for a better future, thrive in this atmosphere of caring and commitment.

The Mill Hill School community is comprised of 493 students, K-5. As a community of educators and learners, we are committed to developing active learners who initiate and assume responsibility for their own learning, and to utilizing technology to prepare them to be successful adults in the 21st century. Leading learners individually and collectively to the point beyond which they are able to educate themselves is our curricular focus. We have a computer lab with twenty-seven workstations, a mobile, wireless computer lab with thirty workstations, which travels from classroom to classroom, and computers and printers in every classroom for use in research, and as tools for the expression of new ideas. This year we expanded our students' technological experience by teaching them to use the SmartBoard to display their multi-media projects, and many of our teachers and students have become proficient this year in the production of iMovies. We have an up-to-date Media Center and our building is fully networked. In addition to a core curriculum and instructional practices that meet the individual needs of learners, we place emphasis on the development of students as productive members of a group of critical thinkers and problem solvers. Through programs like *Above and Beyond*, *Fairfield Arts for Youth*, *High Touch/High Tech*, and the *Mill River Lab*, students go beyond traditional requirements to pursue and extend their learning as they work cooperatively.

Our students, parents and staff have, and will always find in Mill Hill School *a home for the mind and the heart*. Our sense of belonging and pride of kinship to our school and our community have become the roots that reach deep into the fertile ground of the minds and hearts of our school family. Each child and adult learner's work is done with pride and proudly displayed throughout the building; courtesy and good manners are recognized and celebrated; and high expectations as well as a belief in one's self as a competent learner are consistently modeled and reinforced.

At Mill Hill School, we not only lead learners to academic maturity, we also nurture them into a profound understanding of each individual's worth and vitality in the context of the small community we have become, and in the larger context of our global community.

PART IV – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Narrative describing the meaning of the data and results. *(Please reference the data tables in appendices)*

The Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) was designed to measure student performance in the areas of mathematics and language arts. The assessments focus on content that is reasonable to expect students at each grade level to have mastered. Although the legislation specifically prohibits the use of test results as the sole criterion for promotion or graduation, the CMT provides information about achievement that is used for several other purposes. The purposes of the mastery-testing program are:

- To set high expectations and standards for student achievement;
- To test a comprehensive range of academic skills;
- To disseminate useful test achievement information about students, schools and districts;
- To identify students in need of remedial education;
- To assess equitable educational opportunities; and
- To continually monitor student progress in Grades 4, 6 and 8 over time.

Since the curriculum of the Fairfield Public Schools is aligned with Connecticut's state standards, and the state standards are aligned with the CMT, this particular assessment gives us a fairly accurate picture of how aligned our instructional program at Mill Hill is with all three. Using the information our students' scores on this test give us, coupled with information their performance on our own district summative assessments reveals, our classroom teachers and building specialists can pinpoint areas of need for each student, and adjust instruction to address those needs.

Looking at our students' scores on the CMT in reading and in math over the last three years, the following is evident about Mill Hill students' reading achievement:

- 92% or better of Mill Hill students score in the proficient or higher range compared to 69% of the students tested statewide
- Percentages of students scoring proficient at Mill Hill are more stable than the percentages of students scoring in the advanced range at Mill Hill for the three years reported
- An average of 22.66% more Mill Hill students made proficient on the state test than their counterparts across the state of Connecticut over the past three years

Looking at our students' scores on the CMT in reading and math over the last three years, the following is evident about Mill Hill students' math achievement:

- 96% or better of Mill Hill students scored in the proficient or higher range compared to 81% of students statewide
- Percentages of students scoring proficient at Mill Hill are more stable than the percentages of students scoring in the advanced range at Mill Hill for the three years reported
- An average of 15.66% more Mill Hill students made proficient on the state test than their counterparts across the state of Connecticut over the past three years

Mill Hill School has a passionate staff that is committed to student learning and that is willing to share and collaborate with colleagues its programmatic successes. Mill Hill School staff also knows that professional collaboration ultimately increases student academic performance for all.

2. The school's use of assessment data to understand and improve student and school performance.

At Mill Hill School we are studying and applying a system of holistic accountability described by Douglas B. Reeves in his books, *Holistic Accountability: Serving Students, Schools, and Community* (Reeves, 2002) and *Accountability in Action: A Blueprint for Learning Organizations* (Reeves, 2000). This system includes three distinct tiers of data analysis. The first tier includes system-wide indicators such as standardized test scores, attendance, safety and other matters that apply to schools throughout the district. Data for this tier of indicators are stored centrally in the district, and are available to administrators and teachers.

The second tier indicators are school-based and measure strategies that are unique to our school. We store student data to study those indicators on a series of electronic spreadsheets we have developed to help us study student progress. These spreadsheets of student achievement information include both quantitative and qualitative information that is available to every staff member in the building at the double click of a mouse. We use this data to help us determine which students show evidence of the need for extra support in any given discipline, and adjust our building support to meet those needs.

The third tier of our accountability system explores the connection between our instructional practices and the results we see in student achievement. This is a qualitative analysis of student and school performance and provides a useful opportunity for us to express in rich descriptive language information about the school that is not subject to quantitative data analysis.

3. How we communicate student performance data to parents, students, and the community.

At Mill Hill School we communicate student and school performance data to parents, students and the community in a variety of ways. The first and most oft-used way is through regular classroom communication with students on their progress. Teachers do this by providing timely feedback on students' performance measured by rubrics that help students understand how they need to adjust their performance to reach the next level. Student progress is measured against state and district standards as opposed to comparing students to each other. Teachers also share work samples with parents on a regular basis—in some cases daily, weekly and monthly—and confer at report card conferences that occur twice each year. Student work, and the feedback on their progress, is displayed throughout the building. One example of this is the refrigerator door in the main hallway (set up by the school's former principal) on which examples of students' personal best efforts are displayed regularly.

Information about student achievement on standardized tests is communicated directly from the school. The state provides comprehensive information on each student's performance to parents through the school. Prior to receiving that information through the school, we conduct a meeting for our parents to help them understand how to interpret the data they receive from the state. When information about our district's and our school's overall performance on standardized tests is published, we hold meetings through our PTA to report directly to parents how well our students as a group are demonstrating their learning, as well as the areas for goal-setting to achieve better student and school performance.

4. How we will share our successes with others.

At Mill Hill School, our vision is to become a community of learners. Roland Barth, in his book *Learning by Heart* (Barth, 2001), defines a community of learners as one in which all *people* are learners as opposed to Ron Edmonds' description of a community in which all *children* are learners. We believe that in order for students and colleagues to learn from the practice in our school, all stakeholders—students, teachers and parents—must be learners. Consequently, in the same way that we have taken the opportunity to observe and learn from the practice of colleagues in other buildings across the state and in the neighboring New York City school system, we would like to open our school to other educators to visit us physically in our classrooms, and virtually on the Internet to become learners with us.

Through our school district, Mill Hill School has an ongoing learning relationship with the Reading and Writing Project at Teachers College, Columbia University. This alliance allows us to tap into a rich network of research and practice through which we can improve our own learning and share our practice with other schools.

As we learn more about what positively affects student learning through the process of connecting our instructional practices to student achievement results, we are willing to share our knowledge through professional development in our district and across our state.

PART V – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

(Including foreign language, all students are engaged with significant content, based on high standards.)

The curriculum at Mill Hill School is representative of the assured experience offered to all K-5 students in the Fairfield Public Schools. We offer content area instruction in the language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, foreign language, art, music, physical education, health, and library/media. Our curriculum is comprehensive and it offers students, particularly in the intermediate grades, an opportunity to extend their learning and achievement through a rich, multi-disciplinary spectrum of studies.

Language arts instruction is the bedrock of our work in developing lifelong learners. Our language arts program is balanced and conducive to integration into instruction in the other content areas. Instruction follows a model of a “gradual release of responsibility” (Harvey & Goudvis, 2002) from explicit, whole-group instruction to independent practice. We are studying the reading/writing workshop and implementing both in our language arts block. We add the study of a foreign language to our fourth-grade curriculum. Our fourth- and fifth-graders learn Spanish as part of their regular curriculum at Mill Hill.

Our Mathematics program is designed to help each child begin to become familiar with the use and value of mathematics in everyday life. Mill Hill students develop skills that will serve as a foundation for the future study of mathematics at higher grade levels. Students do mathematics through an active learning process of working together and sharing ideas and approaches with each other. They also develop multiple-solving approaches as they investigate mathematical content and then apply strategies to solve a wide variety of problems. Our students talk and write about mathematical topics every day to clarify their thinking and develop confidence as mathematicians.

Our science and social studies programs provide students with opportunities for exploration in the three major areas of life, physical and earth science. Children experiment, gather data, and make intelligent decisions based on scientific evidence. They also discover the creation of connections and relationships between various scientific disciplines as well as science with other disciplines. The latest addition to our science program at Mill Hill is our student garden in which students will learn about how things grow, and about composting. Future projects include the study of renewable energy. Social studies instruction at Mill Hill begins with the child and the family. It expands outward to communities including Fairfield, Connecticut, the United States, and the world. At Mill Hill we celebrate cultural diversity in our own student body. Many of our families come from different parts of the world, contributing a unique multicultural flavor to our school. Social studies instruction places an emphasis on the needs of families and communities; an appreciation of the efforts and contributions of others; and an ethic that stresses giving back to the community and the world through community service. Many of the activities are designed to give the students an introduction to the interrelatedness of history and science and a positive attitude toward the subject matter.

Our arts curriculum encompasses study of the visual as well as the performing arts to facilitate expression through the arts. The major emphasis of our visual and performing arts program at Mill Hill is to help students develop creative thinking and problem solving skills through a variety of art media techniques, movement and vocal music in Kindergarten through third grade. Mill Hill adds an emphasis on choral and instrumental performance at the beginning of the fourth grade when students may choose to be part of our band or our orchestra.

Mill Hill School - Reading Curriculum

Our school is in the process of implementing a balanced approach to literacy instruction. This balanced approach involves the model of the reading/writing workshop in the language arts block of instruction fashioned after the Reading and Writing Project at Teachers College, Columbia University. This approach calls for a curriculum framework that gives reading and writing equal status, and utilizes the findings of researchers like Douglas B. Reeves and Lucy McCormick Calkins on the positive affects of non-fiction writing on student learning and achievement in the language arts. Such a framework recognizes the importance of both the cognitive and affective dimensions of literacy. It acknowledges the development of meaning involved in the full processes of reading and writing for each student, while recognizing the importance of the strategies and skills used by proficient readers and writers. Instructionally, this approach recognizes that individual learners have unique needs that are addressed by the teacher in weekly one-on-one conferences with the students.

Speaking and listening are also central to the development of literacy and are fully integrated into our language arts instruction with reading and writing. Sharon Taberski, in her book, *On Solid Ground: Strategies for Teaching Reading K-3*, points out that part of the teacher's role in teaching students to read is the practice of responding to their reading, and encouraging them to reflect on their reading process orally and in writing. All students in each grade level are encouraged to share their own ideas and respond to the ideas of others in this emphasis on speaking and listening. The overall goal of our curriculum is to promote students' ownership of literacy; that is, to value their own ability to read and write for purposes they have set for themselves at home and at school, and to come to an understanding that they are approaching a point of reading maturity beyond which they can educate themselves. This ownership is developed best in classrooms where students and teachers form a community of learners described by Lucy McCormick Calkins in her book, *The Art of Teaching Reading*. Students within such a community are recognized for their accomplishments as readers, writers, speakers and listeners, and strive to support one another's literacy learning.

Mill Hill School - Mathematics Curriculum

The mathematics curriculum at Mill Hill School is based on a framework of important ideas. At every grade level, students explore and study basic concepts and skills in three areas of mathematics: dealing with data, spatial relationships, and numerical relationships. Our objective-based curriculum spirals so that objectives are revisited throughout the year. Ample opportunity is afforded for students to use manipulatives as well as other problem-solving tools like calculators and computers to ensure their understanding of new concepts.

Students are encouraged to become good problem solvers—thinkers who question, investigate, and explore solutions to problems. We place importance on the application of mathematical skills to solve real world math problems. Students must develop multiple problem solving approaches as they investigate and apply strategies to solve these problems.

Assessment in mathematics includes nine district-wide summative assessments. We also use formative assessments that require students to write explanations and use graphs and diagrams to explain how they solve problems. At all grade levels, students do mathematics through an active learning process working together and sharing ideas and approaches with each other. The essential skills and knowledge in mathematics is seminal to the school's mission of preparing students to be active participants in our increasingly, technological global society.

Mill Hill School – Instructional Methods

At Mill Hill School we use a variety of instructional methods corresponding to the needs of the individual and the class as a whole. Reading instruction is done in whole group read/write/think aloud activities, and progresses to one-on-one conferences. Student independent work is part of the language arts instructional process as well, and during independent practice times students have opportunities to practice the skills they have learned in larger groups and one-on-one conferences.

We also provide one-on-one early (primary grades) intervention in reading instruction for students who are struggling readers. In this model, students may be pulled out of class for the instruction, or it may be provided in the classroom, depending on the needs of the child.

All other content area instruction follows a similar progression from whole-group, teacher-dependent instruction to smaller, cooperative group learning to the independent practice of what students have learned in the larger groups. The key to the success of our instruction is an emphasis on the needs of the individual learner, and that progression from very explicit instruction to independent practice.

Students who require special education services are provided those services in a variety of ways, too. To the extent the child requiring special education support is able, we provide services in the regular classroom with support from a special education staff member. When the needs of the student require pulling her/him out of class for direct support, we provide that as well, in order to best meet the needs of the individual and the class as a whole.

Mill Hill School – Professional Development Program

Improved student learning and achievement is the goal of our professional development plan at Mill Hill School. Each year our district and school leaders set broad goals to improve overall student achievement throughout the district, and at the building level we align our more specific goals with the district's goals. District, building, and classroom goals are set based on student learning and achievement data.

Professional development is provided in three ways throughout the year on specific days of each month. First, our district has a plan for professional development for all staff. This professional development supports the assured experience that all Fairfield Public School students are afforded. Second, our building professional development committee plans a year of professional development activities based on building goals for the staff as a whole. Finally, teachers are given an opportunity to choose professional development conferences outside the district to help them meet their classroom goals. At Mill Hill, we also make use of faculty meeting time to discuss student achievement and ways to meet our goals. Housekeeping items and announcements are shared by way of e-mail to save staff time for professional development. Mill Hill School considers professional development paramount in increasing teaching quality that equates to increased academic success, love of learning and student achievement.

APPENDIX 1
Mill Hill School Grade 4 CMT Scores
Reading

Percentages and Levels	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01	
	Mill Hill	State	Mill Hill	State	Mill Hill	State
% Above Mastery/Level 4 Mill Hill School	86	60	91	58	82	57
% Above Proficient/Level 3 Mill Hill School	92	69	94	71	93	71
% Below Basic/Level 1 Mill Hill School	2	21	1	20	4	20
Number Tested*	85	42599	69	42374	73	41073
Out of Level	0	866	0	1149	0	1664
Skills Checklist	1	282	0	296	0	372
Number Exempt	0	364	0	369	0	851
* Total includes 4th Grade Only						
Disabled (11 students) ** - % Above Proficient	**	17%	50%	21%	**	23%
**Totals include 4 th -graders and 6 th -graders who attended Mill Hill in the prior year						
2001-02 is the only year for which we have disaggregated data for subgroups. No other subgroups constitute a significant population						

Grades Administered: 4 Test: Connecticut Mastery Test

Edition/Publication Year: 2000-01 - Form L - 2000
 2001-02 - Form M - 2001
 2002-03 - Form M - 2002

Publisher: Harcourt Educational Measurement

Groups excluded and why: All grade levels except fourth grade were excluded. The reason is that the State of Connecticut requires the Connecticut Mastery Test administration at Grades 4, 6, 8, and 10. Other grade levels are assessed using district formative and summative assessments.

In the category of disabled students for Mill Hill School, the state did not report achievement information because this category contained less than 10 students. The state does not report subgroups that do not constitute a “significant population.”

APPENDIX 2
Mill Hill School Grade 4 CMT Scores
Math

Percentages and Levels	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01	
	Mill Hill	State	Mill Hill	State	Mill Hill	State
% Above Mastery/Level 4 Mill Hill School	92	60	91	61	83	60
% Above Proficient/Level 3 Mill Hill School	98	81	97	81	96	82
% Below Basic/Level 1 Mill Hill School	1	10	1	9	3	8
Number Tested*	85	42820	69	42813	71	41474
Out of Level	0	698	0	843	2	1383
Skills Checklist	1	282	0	296	0	372
Number Exempt	0	365	0	369	0	834
* Total includes 4th Grade Only						
Disabled (11 students) ** - % Above Proficient	**	25%	70%	26%	**	29%
**Totals include 4 th -graders and 6 th -graders who attended Mill Hill in the prior year						
2001-02 is the only year for which we have disaggregated data for subgroups. No other subgroups constitute a significant population						

Grades Administered: 4 Test: Connecticut Mastery Test

Edition/Publication Year: 2000-01 - Form L - 2000
 2001-02 - Form M - 2001
 2002-03 - Form M - 2002

Publisher: Harcourt Educational Measurement

Groups excluded and why: All grade levels except fourth grade were excluded. The reason is that the State of Connecticut requires the Connecticut Mastery Test administration at Grades 4, 6, 8, and 10. Other grade levels are assessed using district formative and summative assessments.

In the category of disabled students for Mill Hill School, the state did not report achievement information because this category contained less than 10 students. The state does not report subgroups that do not constitute a “significant population.”