

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2009 No Child Left Behind - Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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Type of School: (Check all that apply)  Elementary  Middle  High  K-12  Other  
 Charter  Title I  Magnet  Choice

Name of Principal: Mr. Martin Fiedler

Official School Name: East Ridge Middle School

School Mailing Address:  
10 East Ridge Road  
Ridgefield, CT 06877-5022

County: Fairfield State School Code Number\*: 51

Telephone: (203) 438-3744 Fax: (203) 431-2851

Web site/URL: http://www.ridgefield.org/ E-mail: Mfiedler@ridgefield.org

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Superintendent\*: Ms. Deborah Low

District Name: Ridgefield Tel: (203) 431-2800

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Mr. Austin Drukker

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

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

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

Original signed cover sheet only should be mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as USPS Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, NCLB-Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, US Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173.

## PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made adequate yearly progress each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement in the 2008-2009 school year. AYP must be certified by the state and all appeals resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take the course.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2003.
6. The nominated school has not received the No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, or 2008.
7. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

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

1. Number of schools in the district:
- |          |                     |
|----------|---------------------|
| 6        | Elementary schools  |
| 2        | Middle schools      |
|          | Junior high schools |
| 1        | High schools        |
|          | Other               |
| <b>9</b> | <b>TOTAL</b>        |

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: 12658

Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: 12151

**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. 8 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 as of October 1 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school only:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total	Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK			0	7	121	109	230
K			0	8	146	112	258
1			0	9			0
2			0	10			0
3			0	11			0
4			0	12			0
5			0	Other			0
6	137	122	259				
<b>TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL</b>							747

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 0 %          | American Indian or Alaska Native          |
| 4 %          | Asian                                     |
| 1 %          | Black or African American                 |
| 2 %          | Hispanic or Latino                        |
| 0 %          | Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander |
| 93 %         | White                                     |
| 0 %          | Two or more races                         |
| <b>100 %</b> | <b>Total</b>                              |

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting 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.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 1 %

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

<b>(1)</b>	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	6
<b>(2)</b>	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	5
<b>(3)</b>	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	11
<b>(4)</b>	Total number of students in the school as of October 1.	747
<b>(5)</b>	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.015
<b>(6)</b>	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	1.473

8. Limited English proficient students in the school: 1 %

Total number limited English proficient 8

Number of languages represented: 7

Specify languages:

Tagalog, Korean, Visayan, Spanish, French, Chinese, Ukranian

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 1 %

Total number students who qualify: 11

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-price school meals 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: 10 %

Total Number of Students Served: 76

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>5</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>15</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>46</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>5</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>3</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

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>3</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>51</u>	<u>1</u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>7</u>	<u>0</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>13</u>	<u>1</u>
Support staff	<u>23</u>	<u>1</u>
Total number	<u>97</u>	<u>3</u>

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

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates. Briefly explain in the Notes section any attendance rates under 95%, teacher turnover rates over 12%, or student dropout rates over 5%.

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Daily student attendance	98%	99%	99%	99%	99%
Daily teacher attendance	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
Teacher turnover rate	20%	12%	17%	0%	0%
Student dropout rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Please provide all explanations below.

Students at the middle school level are not permitted to drop out per Connecticut State law.

14. For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools).

Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2008 are doing as of the Fall 2008.

Graduating class size	0	
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	<u>0</u>	%
Enrolled in a community college	<u>0</u>	%
Enrolled in vocational training	<u>0</u>	%
Found employment	<u>0</u>	%
Military service	<u>0</u>	%
Other (travel, staying home, etc.)	<u>0</u>	%
Unknown	<u>0</u>	%
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>100</u></b>	<b>%</b>

## PART III - SUMMARY

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East Ridge Middle School’s culture is rooted in a strong sense of community—fostered by team-teaching and connections with the historic town of Ridgefield. Our population includes children from multigenerational Ridgefield families as well as children from Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America. We are a student-centered school offering a flexible and responsive curriculum to accommodate myriad learning styles; we believe each student has a gift or talent and it is our responsibility to discover and nurture those talents. Our staff creates a climate of trust, security, and pride, which encourages our learners to adopt lifestyles that nourish mind, body, and spirit. Many students arrive before school and stay after the last bell to work with teachers, study with friends, and decorate lockers for birthdays; these ties demonstrate how each student finds a home in our community.

Milestones include honors and awards bestowed on our students and staff, frequently recognized for their excellence and creativity. Evidence of our success is found in exemplary standardized assessment results, and honors and awards presented by respected institutions. For example, our student-produced literary-art magazine *Doorways*, was recently awarded the Columbia University Scholastic Press Association’s prestigious “Crown Award.” Additionally, our students participate in competition-level music ensembles, world language poetry contests, and math team events; all receive top prizes and superlative honors. Our “We the People” Constitutional competition team paved the way for the establishment of a middle school state-wide competition; this competition was previously limited to high school teams.

We have a tradition of celebrating student achievement; student capability and talent are continually showcased through extraordinary projects and special programs. For example, students raise trout from eggs in a hatchery in one of our science labs for Connecticut’s Department of Environmental Protection; students design and construct a museum dedicated to an ancient civilization. Students participate in our annual theatrical production, and produce and star in our daily morning newscast, “The Morning Show,” which is streamed to every classroom through our network.

Another tradition is our “Activity Period,” consisting of six sessions built into the school day on a semiannual basis. As middle school educators, we view the “Activity Period,” 35 engaging and diverse classes, as essential to giving voice to the diverse talents of our student body. Each “Activity Period” is an opportunity for students to learn outside of the formal curriculum, and interact with peers and teachers from all grades and teams, thus strengthening their connections to our school.

Our vibrant and active student council is exceptional at embracing projects that benefit East Ridge, the community, and the world. Examples include our school’s recycling program, which is now replicated district-wide, a holiday gift drive for disadvantaged children, multiple food pantry drives, elder care assistance, and toothbrush collections for Honduran children.

Our PTA is deeply supportive—social gatherings, dances, professional performances, guest speakers, mini-grants for teachers, and numerous parent-teacher workshops are fully funded by our PTA. Email “blasts” ensure timely, effective communication between parents and school, and its quarterly newsletter, *The Paw Print*, features articles and vital information from our faculty and PTA. PTA-sponsored staff luncheons and breakfasts demonstrate the organization’s sincere appreciation of our staff. The PTA’s commitment to our school elevates East Ridge to greatness.

Our mission, as a team of teachers and administrators, is to collaborate with students, parents and community to provide experiences that engender self-directed learning, self-discovery, personal responsibility, and civic understanding. Our milestones, traditions, and tightly knit community give our students a sense of belonging and accomplishment. Our vision is to furnish students with the tools, skills, and knowledge to contribute to the greater society in the twenty-first century.

## PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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### 1. Assessment Results:

Significant trends are evident at each grade level in the data included in this application. In grade six, trends are observed in mathematics and reading performance. In mathematics, the percentage of students meeting and exceeding state standards shows a three-year decrease followed by a sharp two-year increase; this is mirrored in our special education subgroup, which exhibits a significant increase in performance from 2006 to 2008 (from 36% meeting plus exceeding state standards to 58% and then 73%). Reading performance over the same time period in grade six exhibits a similar pattern of decrease then marked increase; however, in the special education subgroup, the trend shows steadily increasing performance over the past five years.

Connecticut started assessing grade seven students in mathematics and reading in 2005-2006. In mathematics, the percentage of students meeting plus exceeding state standards shows a three-year increase; a significant increase is observed in our special education subgroup (36% meeting plus exceeding state standards to 52% meeting plus exceeding state standards). Reading performance over this time period exhibits a similar pattern of increasing student performance.

In grade eight, in mathematics, the percentage of students meeting and exceeding state standards shows consistent performance marked by high achievement over the past five years. However, our special education subgroup in grade eight over this period, shows a significant decrease in performance, leading us to analyses, recommendations, and interventions. Reading performance over the same time period shows consistent performance marked by high achievement over the past five years. However, our special education subgroup in eighth grade during this period, shows a significant decrease in performance, again leading us to additional analyses, recommendations, and interventions. We also understand that, due to the minimal sample size of our special education population, mathematics and reading performance is subject to significant fluctuation from year to year.

Moving the CMTs from October to March, in 2007, permitted our students to demonstrate their understanding of mathematics and reading based on current relevant instruction. When the CMTs were administered in October, students relied on knowledge from the prior school year; moving these assessments to March permits our school to respond to the data and inform instruction. At the start of the school year, administration and teaching faculty analyze performance data received over the summer break. We meet as a staff—broken down into teaching teams, departments, and grade levels—to plan goals and interventions aimed at addressing specific deficiencies in student performance. In this manner, we are able to tailor our standards-based curriculum and instructional approaches to help students perform to the best of their abilities on the CMTs. The CMTs are designed to serve as summative assessments of student performance; the previously described data trends demonstrate the importance of moving the CMTs to spring.

At East Ridge, working with student performance data does not end in September. After three years of analyzing data and trends with staff and responding to our findings with revised instruction, we now enjoy a noticeable level of comfort working with data. Data-driven educational decision-making has become ingrained in our culture; teachers frequently request specific data from administrators to answer specific questions. This fundamental shift in emphasis is essential—instead of presenting mountains of data and then attempting to make sense of it, teachers raise questions and then seek data aimed at answering those questions.

The CMT is divided into five key performance levels (1–Below Basic; 2–Basic; 3–Proficient; 4–Goal; 5–Advanced); each level is further delineated by score ranges in specific performance strands. Students must score in the “goal” range or above to “meet the standard.”

The following web site provides information on the Connecticut State assessment system:  
[www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/assessment/index.htm?dsftns=45638](http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/assessment/index.htm?dsftns=45638); this site provides detailed information regarding CMT scores in all categories from grade 3 through grade 8:  
[www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/assessment/cmt/resources/misc\\_cmt/2008\\_cmt\\_interpretive\\_guide.pdf](http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/assessment/cmt/resources/misc_cmt/2008_cmt_interpretive_guide.pdf)

## **2. Using Assessment Results:**

East Ridge uses assessment data and analyses to understand student achievement and inform instruction. Assessment data include external summative assessments, like CMTs, and internal formative assessments, such as common assessments, performance-based learning assessments (PBLAs), and assured experiences. Results from these assessments furnish cross-sectional and longitudinal data. Important to note, this wealth of student achievement data is delivered to us electronically, which permits user-friendly analyses. As a result, we leverage summative assessment data to inform and shape our formative assessments, and vice versa. This iterative process is elemental to our instructional improvement plan and has become central to improving student learning and achievement.

At the start of each school year, summative data are distributed to staff; teachers metabolize data at the school, grade and classroom level. These data are delineated by content strands and key performance indicators. Descriptive statistics and graphs are generated to evaluate results against formative—internal—indicators of success and weakness. Staff members examine results of prior and present students, permitting teachers to reflect and fine-tune their instructional methods.

One of the primary outcomes of this process is the continued development of formative assessments. For example, PBLAs measure academic mastery in specific content strands and thinking skills, which are specifically assessed by the CMTs.

The use of assessment results to improve teaching and learning is a process in our middle school. New strategies are continually evaluated, modified, and then reintroduced into the learning environment as new assessment data is evaluated. Once a strategy has been determined as successful, it is incorporated directly into the school curriculum. Student learning is placed on a continued scale of improvement, where mastery of skills is the goal before students move onto the next grade.

## **3. Communicating Assessment Results:**

Communicating assessment results and student performance is integral to our professional practice at East Ridge. Students' standardized test performances, plus detailed explanations of their scores—including individual scores and comparisons to students in their grade, school, district, and state—are provided to all parents. Guidance counselors, team teachers, and administrators are available to discuss results with concerned parents.

Teachers communicate with parents every five weeks through progress reports and quarterly report cards in which they share their reflections and assessments of student performance. At the end of each quarter, report cards that feature course grades and comments are mailed home. Parents review report cards and may contact teachers or counselors to review grades. Teachers and counselors of struggling students reach out to parents before reports are mailed home to create plans to ensure student success.

In addition to test scores and report cards, parents learn about their children during parent/teacher conferences. Parent conferences can also be scheduled during daily team teacher meetings. Students may be invited to these meetings and thus become part of a bigger team that works toward their success. For example, students who do not complete homework assignments discuss strategies with parents and teachers to complete assignments with increasing regularity.

Email is another vital method of communication, and a great way to share student progress throughout the year. Through email, teachers provide parents with timely feedback; in turn, parents are encouraged to email teachers if they have questions about student progress or assignments. Recently, our district updated its web site and teacher home pages; teachers post assignments and class information, thus linking students, teachers and parents.

The community is informed of student performance through a regular column from our principal and in articles that appear with some regularity in local and area newspapers.

#### **4. Sharing Success:**

At East Ridge, one measure of our success is measured by our ability to improve student achievement. Evidence of our continued success is observed in our CMT achievement, interdisciplinary projects, community involvement, charitable outreach, and special honors and awards bestowed on students and teachers involved in outstanding projects and initiatives. We maintain that sharing success with others presents a learning experience for us. Therefore, sharing our exemplary practice is core to our mission of continual improvement.

One of our key talents is our staff's capacity for analyzing and responding to data and planning appropriate instruction to improve student achievement. As a result, our expertise in using data has been recognized throughout and beyond our district.

As active members of the Tri-State Consortium, a group of high-achieving school districts that serve as "critical friends," educational leaders seek the counsel of our administrators and teachers to learn best practices in areas such as writing instruction, and how to produce a student-run televised news show. In addition, our principal has shared with interested administrators, within and outside the district, his successful formula for scheduling blocks of teaching time and common preparation periods for teams and departments.

Without exception, we invite members of our professional community, the Ridgefield community, our active PTA, and area press to witness and celebrate our students engaged in learning. Special events, such as our Veteran's Day Assembly, Lewis and Clark Expedition, Shakespeare Festival, Heritage Project, Ancient Culture Museum, Live Coral Reef, and Holiday Toy Drive, give us ways to share experiences with our community and schools throughout our region. These experiences, often rooted in academic and interdisciplinary standards, promote social awareness, honor our community, provide for charities, and engage students in authentic learning.

In the event we are honored with Blue Ribbon School status, we anticipate exciting, new opportunities to share our successes and learn from others in our expanded sphere.

## PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Curriculum:

Our curriculum is grounded in a balanced model; it ensures that instruction is aligned with standards and assessments while providing each teacher with a flexible framework. Our curriculum remains responsive and open to revision, based on assessment results and revised standards. To this end, our instructional program features core academics, world language, art, music, family and consumer science, health education, and physical education.

In mathematics, students study patterns and relationships—by developing models, solving problems, and making decisions. Students are placed according to ability level into courses ranging from grade-level math to high school algebra and geometry. Teachers use technology for instruction and students use it for data collecting, graphing, analyzing, and problem solving.

Our science program welcomes students to inquiry, invention, and discovery through challenging standards-based courses. Linked sequentially with our math programming, we offer four science courses: Environmental Science, Life Science, Earth Science, and Physical Science. Our science staff specializes in each discipline to ensure mile-deep, content-rich, inquiry-based science instruction.

The social studies curriculum focuses on critical thinking, analytical writing, deductive and inductive reasoning, and note-taking. Students construct meaning from the past by questioning, analyzing, and interpreting evidence and historical accounts. Current events are incorporated at each grade level; connections to our past are explored. Students study the cultures of ancient civilizations, world geography, U.S. history, and modern European history.

Our English curriculum delivers reading instruction through a selection of new literature and classic texts, and fiction and non-fiction writing instruction. Students develop oratorical and listening skills over a three-year continuum. Reading and writing workshops provide individualized instruction; individual contact with teachers leads to outstanding student achievement.

World language presents Mandarin, French, German, and Spanish. Students begin world language study through an examination of culture, leading to oral, reading, and writing proficiency, reflecting state and national standards. Students develop receptive and expressive communication skills, the foundation for effective communication with native speakers.

The art curriculum provides students with opportunities to explore two-dimensional and three-dimensional media. Emphasis on individual creative expression is valued. Students enjoy a large, open studio with natural light and state-of-the-art kiln. A professionally designed “ARTSPACE Gallery” exhibits student work and traveling interdisciplinary exhibits; it is visited by students, staff, and the community.

The music department offers Band, Chorus, Orchestra, and Music Elements. Students develop music appreciation, learn their selected instruments, and become contributing members of performing groups. In Music Elements, students explore musical expression through hands-on guitar and piano playing, and the acclaimed “World Music Drumming” program. Courses incorporate music composition using traditional and digital platforms.

The physical education program helps students integrate physical fitness and safety/first-aid as indispensable components of healthy living. The curriculum includes kinesthetic games, team sports, dance, fitness planning, and Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation. All students participate in “Project Adventure,” a nationally recognized program that promotes cooperation and problem-solving through physical challenges.

Family and consumer science teaches students about nutrition, wellness, and life-skills such as sewing, and food preparation; this program offers increasingly complex activities and projects over three years.

Health education teachers relate to students by sharing critical information about injury and disease prevention, human sexuality, HIV/AIDS, alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse. Decision-making, goal-setting, communication skills, and other life skills are woven into the curriculum.

Our librarian teaches research practices; students learn to identify credible and meaningful sources from texts and databases. Our library media center is complete with computer labs for intensive in-class research and writing assignments. We catalog DVDs, CDs, a scanner, iPods, digital cameras, video cameras, and broadcast live streaming video to enhance learning in the twenty-first century.

## **2b. (Secondary Schools) English:**

The philosophy behind our English curriculum is that language is essential to our humanity and is an integral part of our learning process; it is through language that we learn to communicate and to think. Our goal is to develop self-directed and self-reflective learners who read with high levels of comprehension, analyze and synthesize what they read, and write skillfully with passion.

“Change and Diversity” is the sixth grade theme; assured reading experiences include *The Cay* and *Charlotte Doyle*. These texts allow teachers to focus on initial understanding; students summarize stories, identify contextual clues, main ideas and themes, and analyze how characters solve problems. Because improving reading comprehension is critical, our PTA has funded leveled-libraries in sixth grade classrooms, creating opportunities for all students to read books perfectly suited to them.

The seventh grade theme is “Search for Self”; self-reflection and peer assessment is emphasized. Assured experiences include reading *The Outsiders* and *Touching Spirit Bear*. Students develop a critical stance by studying character development and responding to values, customs, ethics, and beliefs. The “self” is also examined through the study of heroes; students search for connections while reflecting on heroes in texts.

In eighth grade, students study “The Individual and Society”; individual voice is explored in their written pieces. Assured experiences include reading *Twelve Angry Men*, *Animal Farm*, and *The Giver*. Students build connections by comparing situations in novels to their own experiences. At this level, students hone public speaking skills through mock trials, debates, and our Heritage Project, as they develop a personalized sense of social justice.

Individualized attention is vital to growth and enrichment; students use writer’s notebooks to reflect on topics and English classrooms have conference tables where teachers and students discuss, revise, and edit writing. Several English classes are co-taught with a writing paraprofessional whose background in publishing brings added meaning to individualized instruction.

## **3. Additional Curriculum Area:**

Our social studies curriculum develops students into informed and active citizens, problem solvers, collaborative workers, and self-directed and self-reflective learners. Students analyze and interpret primary and secondary sources, share knowledge, and complete research tasks. Inquiry-based classroom activities and interdisciplinary projects offer students opportunities to take ownership of knowledge. At each grade level, our programming pairs content—the stories that build our understanding of history—with our conceptual understanding of history—how we record, evaluate, and synthesize evidence.

In sixth grade, students explore world geography and cultures. For example, students become amateur archaeologists by identifying and analyzing artifacts. Others design, construct and run a museum based on one

ancient culture (Egypt, China, or Greece), which is visited by other schools and our community. Note-taking is a critical skill introduced at this level and current events are directly related to the course of study.

The seventh grade curriculum is a study of American history. Students participate in debates in an interdisciplinary project with English to develop persuasive writing techniques and argue issues embedded in Constitutional amendments. Working with partners, students investigate topics, research relevant court cases, and present arguments. Judging and assessing quality of evidence is essential to studies at this level.

In eighth grade, through a study of post-Civil War American history, students focus on academic research and oral presentation. In a culminating activity, students develop and implement action plans toward solving local or global issues. For example, a student benefited an African community when he raised \$2,500 by organizing a basketball competition.

At all levels, social studies teachers at East Ridge use the Socratic method of questioning, which permits students to share points of view, opinions and engage in dialogue. Students develop confidence in their ability to research topics, take a position, and defend their positions based on evidence.

#### **4. Instructional Methods:**

Our faculty employs multiple instructional methods to achieve our shared vision of reaching every student in our building. To address the learning needs of all students—in part by understanding their motivations and interests—teachers at East Ridge incorporate approaches such as differentiation, authentic assessment, and constructivism into a flexible and responsive instructional program. The underlying value of each instructional approach within our learning environment is considered through the lens of our data set, which incorporates internal and external qualitative and quantitative metrics. Effective instruction leads to student achievement.

At East Ridge, reaching learners at all ability levels is accomplished by tailoring instruction. To do this, we reflect on student learning and performance through ongoing formative assessment. Formative assessment permits teachers to measure student achievement; it also helps our staff self-assess instructional effectiveness.

Currently, nine classes are co-taught by regular and special education teachers. During their daily planning meetings, these staff members discuss modifications and materials to address all learning modalities. Common planning time also permits teachers to prepare collaborative interdisciplinary lessons as well as special education inclusion and modifications.

To address the learning needs of all, teachers employ technology. Our classrooms are well equipped with a district-wide student information system, ceiling-mounted digital projectors, student computers, Smartboards, graphing calculators, and document cameras. Together, these tools remove barriers for teachers seeking to present new learning opportunities.

As a middle school, we acknowledge student motivation and interest in the learning equation. Student choice is a major element of classroom activities, whether students choose novels in English class, select Project Adventure activities in physical education, or decide on a world language to study. Students are positioned in the center of their learning experience; this serves to motivate and empower them to exceed course expectations.

#### **5. Professional Development:**

At its core, professional development at East Ridge is teacher-centered; its aim is to exhibit research-based instructional methods, foster professional relationships, build analytical skills and increase content knowledge. Combined, these approaches enhance instruction, which positively impacts student achievement.

To sustain comprehensive programming, professional development occurs at the classroom, school and district level. For example, teachers engage in peer observation, and then exchange ideas during team meetings. At school, our schedule has multiple half- and full-day professional development sessions and all new teachers are mentored one-on-one through the Beginning Educator Support Training (BEST) program. At the district level, experts in instructional methods demonstrate techniques and share research with our staff, and all teachers are invited to attend our annual district leadership conference in June. In addition, Ridgefield school district is an active member of the Tri-State Consortium, which provides opportunities for East Ridge administrators and teachers to visit other school districts and share knowledge about teaching strategies.

In response to current goals, created as a result of our data-driven decision-making process, professional development topics include teaching strategies for differentiated learning, inclusion, writing, math, and technology-enhanced instruction. To support student learning, teachers attend workshops facilitated by renowned guest speakers.

Currently, we have an inclusion consultant working with our special education teachers and a math specialist working with our math department. Last year, we hosted a writing consultant who worked with teachers at all levels and disciplines on reading non-fiction and note-taking. Daily grade-level team meetings and monthly department meetings provide ongoing dialogue regarding content areas, and student performance is addressed at grade level and department meetings.

We believe that students benefit when teachers use new, tested methodologies—introduced to them through professional development—to accommodate student learning styles and needs.

## **6. School Leadership:**

Our collaborative leadership structure, established by the principal, creates a culture of openness and one that is dedicated to improving student achievement. The foundation of this structure is our Instructional Team. Under the principal's guidance, assistant principals, department leaders, and senior teachers assess programming, make budgetary decisions, and determine how to allocate resources. Collegiality among this group of school leaders ensures that the instructional requirements of every department, hence, every student, is met. Our leadership structure results in an instructional environment tailored to individual student readiness.

In line with this structure, the principal relies on policies, programs, relationships, and resources to improve student achievement. For example, the principal instituted a policy of common preparation periods so team teachers can review student progress and plan interdisciplinary activities four days per week. Departments meet one day per week to share successes and best practices.

Programs may be created in concert with administrators. For example, the principal introduced a writing program with the English department leader to create richer student dialogue about literature. One assistant principal planned a program with the science department leader to help students experience food preservation techniques from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, thus illuminating the “human story” of survival. Another assistant principal created lessons—videotaped in four languages—with the world language department leader to help fifth grade students and their parents select a language for sixth grade.

Classroom visitations between teachers are ingrained into our practice; informal mentoring is ongoing. Robust relationships among teaching professionals result in sharing great lessons and resources. The outcome is improved student achievement.

Within our collaborative leadership structure, we have established a culture of openness. Staff members feel comfortable raising issues of concern, knowing they will be addressed fairly and expeditiously; this sets a positive tone for our school. Great teaching and student success naturally follow.

# PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 6 Test: Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)

Edition/Publication Year: Generation 4; 2 Publisher: Connecticut State Department of Education

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Oct	Oct
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Meeting plus Exceeding State Standards ('Goal' plus 'Advanced')	94	92	78	82	89
% Exceeding State Standards ('Advanced')	58	56	56	31	41
Number of students tested	256	229	260	251	246
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. (specify subgroup): Special Education (IEP)</b>					
% Meeting plus Exceeding State Standards ('Goal' plus 'Advanced')	73	58	36	49	48
% Exceeding State Standards ('Advanced')	15	12	6	9	4
Number of students tested	26	26	36	35	25
<b>4. (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Reading

Grade: 6 Test: Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)

Edition/Publication Year: Generation 4; 2 Publisher: Connecticut State Department of Education

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Oct	Oct
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Meeting plus Exceeding State Standards ('Goal' plus 'Advanced')	92	93	86	83	87
% Exceeding State Standards ('Advanced')	49	43	34	29	31
Number of students tested	256	230	260	251	247
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. (specify subgroup): Special Education (IEP)</b>					
% Meeting plus Exceeding State Standards ('Goal' plus 'Advanced')	69	58	50	51	40
% Exceeding State Standards ('Advanced')	15	4	6	3	4
Number of students tested	26	26	36	35	25
<b>4. (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 7 Test: Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)

Edition/Publication Year: Generation 4; 2 Publisher: Connecticut State Department of Education

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Oct	Oct
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Meeting plus Exceeding State Standards ('Goal' plus 'Advanced')	90	87	81	0	0
% Exceeding State Standards ('Advanced')	59	47	42	0	0
Number of students tested	223	253	251	0	0
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	0	0
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0		
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0		
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. (specify subgroup): Special Education (IEP)</b>					
% Meeting plus Exceeding State Standards ('Goal' plus 'Advanced')	52	41	36		
% Exceeding State Standards ('Advanced')	5	4	6		
Number of students tested	21	27	36		
<b>4. (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Reading

Grade: 7 Test: Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)

Edition/Publication Year: Generation 4; 2 Publisher: Connecticut State Department of Education

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Oct	Oct
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Meeting plus Exceeding State Standards ('Goal' plus 'Advanced')	91	89	89	0	0
% Exceeding State Standards ('Advanced')	55	55	47	0	0
Number of students tested	224	253	251	0	0
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	0	0
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. (specify subgroup): Special Education (IEP)</b>					
% Meeting plus Exceeding State Standards ('Goal' plus 'Advanced')	57	44	53		
% Exceeding State Standards ('Advanced')	14	11	8		
Number of students tested	21	27	36		
<b>4. (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 8 Test: Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)

Edition/Publication Year: Generation 4; 2 Publisher: Connecticut State Department of Education

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Oct	Oct
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Meeting plus Exceeding State Standards ('Goal' plus 'Advanced')	90	88	92	88	86
% Exceeding State Standards ('Advanced')	52	54	54	37	44
Number of students tested	257	250	237	279	250
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. (specify subgroup): Special Education (IEP)</b>					
% Meeting plus Exceeding State Standards ('Goal' plus 'Advanced')	28	47	60	52	50
% Exceeding State Standards ('Advanced')	0	13	20	8	4
Number of students tested	25	30	15	39	24
<b>4. (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Reading

Grade: 8 Test: Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)

Edition/Publication Year: Generation 4; 2 Publisher: Connecticut State Department of Education

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Oct	Oct
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Meeting plus Exceeding State Standards ('Goal' plus 'Advanced')	90	89	92	86	91
% Exceeding State Standards ('Advanced')	49	46	55	42	43
Number of students tested	257	250	240	279	252
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. (specify subgroup): Special Education (IEP)</b>					
% Meeting plus Exceeding State Standards ('Goal' plus 'Advanced')	44	70	80	46	62
% Exceeding State Standards ('Advanced')	16	7	20	10	4
Number of students tested	25	30	15	39	24
<b>4. (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes: