



SIDE BY SIDE

CHARTER SCHOOL

Annual Report ***2013-14***

Side by Side Charter School

10 Chestnut Street, Norwalk CT 06854

Phone: 203-857-0306

www.sbscharter.org

Mr. Matthew Nittoly

Executive Director

Tel: 203-857-0306, ext. 133

Email: mnittoly@sbscharter.org

Mission Statement

The mission of Side by Side Charter School is to ensure that every child succeeds and every voice is heard. We will engage our students in a challenging and relevant curriculum of the highest standard that will reflect and enhance their diversity and promote their unique gifts and talents.

We will build character and responsibility through public service and political action that will instill a sense of social justice.

We will support the needs of our families. We will strive to perfect the art and craft of teaching and promote excellence in our profession.



SIDE BY SIDE
CHARTER SCHOOL

**EDUCATION SHOULD NEVER BE ABOUT LIMITATIONS.
IT'S ABOUT POSSIBILITIES.**

**LEARNING SHOULD NOT BE A CHORE.
IT'S ABOUT POTENTIAL.**

**TEACHING SHOULDN'T BE A JOB.
IT'S A PROMISE.**

**WHEN WE TEACH AND LEARN, SIDE BY SIDE,
WE PUSH BEYOND THE STATUS QUO.**

**IN FACT, WE ARE COMMITTED TO ACTIVELY
CHALLENGE THE STATUS QUO.**

**WE WILL NOT IGNORE OUR YOUTH,
NOR WILL WE EVER PUT ADULT AGENDAS FIRST.**

**WE ARE SIDE BY SIDE, AND WE ARE PASSIONATE
ABOUT EDUCATING THE HUMAN RACE FORWARD.**

**WE BELIEVE IN GIVING EACH AND EVERY CHILD
WHAT THEY RIGHTFULLY DESERVE;**

**A PERSONAL EDUCATION THAT ENSURES EVERY
STUDENT HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO SUCCEED,**

STRIVING TO BE BETTER, DAY AFTER DAY.

**BECAUSE OUR EDUCATION IS THE BEST CHANCE WE
HAVE TO A BRIGHT FUTURE.**

**WE ARE PROUD TO BE THE SQUARE PEGS IN THE
ROUND HOLES OF EDUCATION.**

**BECAUSE WE KNOW WE CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE.
AND THE DIFFERENCE CAN CHANGE OUR WORLD.**

WE ARE SIDE BY SIDE.

Contents

Table of Contents

A Letter from the Director of the School and Governing Board Chairperson	6
About Our School	9
Curriculum Design and Instructional Method and Modification.....	11
School Goals	13
Efforts to Effectively Attract, Enroll and Retain Students from Among High Need Populations	25
Financial Information.....	27
Best Practices.....	28
Status of Charter Renewal Findings and Follow-up Activities.....	30
Governance	32
Summary of Other Key Accomplishments.....	33
Attachments	37



A Letter from the Director of the School and Governing Board Chairperson

We are pleased to report that Side by Side Charter School continues to provide a high level of service to all of the students, staff, families, and friends that embody our institution. Our trend of consistent student progress, representation of social justice and thorough & transparent business management continued for an amazing 17th consecutive year in 2013-14.

Side by Side is a true “COMMUNITY” school where students, families, teachers, and staff work together, side by side, to help build curious, resilient, and enthusiastic 21st century learners. Our focus on providing opportunities for children and their families is an organic whole-child approach that goes well-beyond teaching academics. The 2013-14 year at Side by Side was an amazing one on many levels. Some new accomplishments include the implementation of authentic, teacher-created CCSS units of study that capture the social justice mission of our program; a new partnership with the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art which will initiate a series of artist residency programs for our students, a continued Professional Development partnership with Quinnipiac University which included a collaborative presentation at the 2014 National PDS conference; our inaugural participation in the “World Marathon Challenge”; our enrichment Robotics team winning the “Core Values” 1st place trophy in the First Lego League Robotics CT State Championship; and much, much more. In addition to the many new areas that we have begun to explore, we continue to grow and prosper in the fashion that we have since our inception in 1997.

Academics:

Side By Side underwent tremendous changes in the areas of academics, curriculum and teaching & learning during the 2013-2014 school year. One of biggest and most recent accomplishments would be our new Social Studies themed, Common Core units of study. Side by Side administration and teachers collaboratively worked during Wednesday afternoon PD sessions and throughout the summer months for the past 2 years creating these new units. Not only do these new, interdisciplinary curricular units adhere to the CCSS, but they are also true to the mission and focus of Side by Side by incorporating a social justice theme throughout. As we finished developing and began implementing these new CCSS curriculum units, students were held to higher learning expectations than ever before. Overall, progress was made in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics and science. However, the creation of interim assessment systems to measure student progress in the absence of state standardized tests and school performance indices that provide the metrics for longitudinal data disaggregation and analysis has proven challenging to a school with limited infrastructure and resources. As a result, we have relied more heavily on SRBI screenings running records, and benchmark assessments.

As an educational institution, our Board, administration and teaching staff continues to implement plans for improvement in terms of teaching and learning in all areas. Our school improvement plans are driven by teacher, student and parent dialogue and collaborative work in three important categories: (1) **Data collection and analysis**, (2) **Assessment and evaluation of student progress**, and (3) **Curriculum development/standard alignment**. As a result, efforts have been focused on providing the professional development, collaborative time, and administrative support required to address these three focus areas.

Professional Development:

The modernized professional development model at Side by Side is in an effort to capture the unique structure, size and framework of our school. In addition to school-wide common goals for our faculty, we continued to implement a more individualized approach to professional development. It is our hope that an individualized PD model would allow our school to expand capacity, strengthen infrastructure, and create a sense of professionalism and pride. The intent of an individualized professional development plan is to improve, expand, and strengthen specific teaching skills, pupil services, or leadership repertoire, based on an individual's self-identified area of strength and need. By allowing each individual teacher to focus on a selected area of strength, we would begin to develop and utilize an "in-house" team of experts. Each of our teachers has identified an area of strength to focus on and to deliver that expertise to the rest of the school. Such areas included: math diagnostics & interventions; TESOL; multi-sensory-literacy instruction; technology integration; standards based grading; project based learning; literacy interventions; and teacher leadership. Teachers would attend varying workshops, webinars, and trainings to further develop their specific areas of interest and strength. Each teacher would then assume responsibility for sharing their expertise as needed in the teaching and learning process throughout our school community. For a tiny charter school district with only one class per grade level, this model proved to be a successful initiative that continued in 2013-14.

Business and Finance:

In terms of our business and financial affairs, we have continued to follow a successful method of cautious spending and meticulous planning to provide all of our students and staff with the materials needed to be successful in the classrooms. The School's Finance Committee and Board of Directors continued to hold monthly meetings to review financial statements and to strategically plan for future improvements. After several years of planned year-end surpluses, for the first time during the 2013-14 academic year the Side by Side Board of Directors established a "Board designated fund" with nearly \$500K in capital reserves. We will continue to grow this designated fund to be utilized for planning for constructing a new Upper School facility within the next couple of years.

Fundraising:

In 2013-14 several community fundraising efforts once again helped to ensure the continuation of enrichment/field trip offerings to our students. For the 11th consecutive year the ***Side by Side Annual Fundraising Gala*** was held. This dinner/dance and silent auction for the benefit of the students at Side by Side totaled more than \$18,000 in net proceeds. In addition to the Gala, ***Side by Side's 'Cocktails for a Cause' fundraiser*** helped to fund over \$3K multiple student-enrichment performances and activities.

In closing, the Board, administration, staff, families and students of Side by Side Charter School are proud of the importance that is placed on education in CT and in keeping up with the necessary demands of accountability with which we are faced. We look forward to implementing our new Common Core State Standards curriculum and taking part in the new SBAC student assessments. In addition, the administration and teaching faculty at Side by Side welcome the new System for Educator Evaluation and Development and hope to reap the benefits of the data generated from these systems soon. We welcome a new system of measuring student achievement that goes beyond the limitations of CMT scores and *No Child Left Behind*. We have enthusiastically and successfully entered into an age of using data analyses to make important curricular, educational program decisions for every child attending Side by Side. We have been fortunate to receive the necessary training and provisions to take on these responsibilities and will continue to amend our programs as needed to meet such demands. Our individualized approach towards providing academic and social interventions for children and their families is second to none. Knowing our positive impact both on families and on our students, especially long-term, we will continue to move forward and strive for greater success.

As demonstrated by a successful 17 years of existence, Side by Side continues to make enormous strides academically, professionally, financially, and socially. We are proud to present and publish all of the contents of the 'Side by Side Annual Report 2013-14.' We anticipate a long and prosperous future, and look forward to continuing to educate the diverse population of children in Connecticut.

Respectfully Submitted,

Matthew Nittoly
Director

Dr. Anne Dichele
SBS Board Chair

About Our School

Admissions Process

As in previous years, all students residing in Connecticut are eligible to attend Side by Side Charter School. Admission is via a public lottery, which is held each year in late April. We begin our lottery process by surveying parents, which allows us to forecast future vacancies, and to determine how many siblings are applying for entry to SBS the next school year. As keeping families together remain a priority for SBS, siblings are moved to the top of our waiting list. Sixteen siblings of current families applied in our sibling lottery. Public Applications were made available during our Open Houses, which began in January; and the public lottery drawing was held on April 24.

This past year, we hosted five (5) open-house/tour dates (three mornings and two evening). During our tours, parents had the opportunity of hearing from our director, student services coordinator and teachers about our curriculum, teaching methods, and partnerships. Additionally, our Family Resource Center staff members (FRC coordinator and school social worker) shared information about our Family Resource Center (FRC); which includes our before- and after-school care programs, Parents as Teachers Program (PAT) and the many resources available to parents and the community.

Recruitment Methods

Each year, we begin our recruitment efforts in early January of each year by surveying our current families as stated in our Admissions Process. Additionally, we advertise our school and lottery information via local newspapers, notice to parents via our Monthly Newsletter, posters, flyers and campaign signs posted throughout Norwalk and the surrounding communities.

Transportation

All Norwalk students receive bus transportation to Side by Side that is provided by Norwalk Public School system (grades Kindergarten through eighth only). Students that reside outside of Norwalk must rely on parent or public transportation to/from school each day.

Hours & Services

- School hours are 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM
- Early Room is available from 7:30-9:00am and Extended Day program is available from 3:30-5:30pm, for which fees are determined on a sliding scale.

Student Information

Based on our lottery process, which began in January 2013, one hundred sixty (160) applications were received for the April 2013 lottery and included applicants from the communities of Norwalk, Bridgeport, Fairfield, Stamford, and Stratford. Nine (9) of the applicants were parent requests (of current families) for sibling placement. As of October 1, one hundred fifteen (115) applicants remained on our waiting list for the school year 2013-14, as follows:

2013-14 School Year

For the 2013-14 School Year, 160 public and 9 sibling applications were received for fall 2013 enrollment. A total of 115 applicants remained on the waiting list for the 2013-14 school year, as follows:

Grade	# of public applications	# of sibling applications	# seats filled	# students on wait list (1 st October):
Pk3	48	5	18	31
Pk4	25	0	3	21
K	38	2	5	27
1	12	0	1	8
2	5	0	2	2
3	7	0	0	7
4	5	1	2	4
5	7	0	1	5
6	10	0	2	7
7	3	0	0	3
8	0	1	0	0
Totals	160	9	34	115*

**Some families declined our offer for enrollment, therefore were removed from applicant list.*

Student Enrollment as of October 1, 2013: 235 Students

25% White; 75% Minority, of which 10% are Asian

52% Male; 48% Female

86% Norwalk; 14% Regional (Bridgeport, Norwalk, Fairfield, Stamford and Stratford)

Current 2014-15 School Year

For the current 2014-15 School Year, we received 162 public applications and 15 sibling applications. A total of 126 applicants remain on the waiting list for the 2014-15 school year, as follows:

Grade	# of public applications	# of sibling applications	# seats filled	# students projected to remain on wait list (10/1):
Pk3	56	8	17	45
Pk4	23	1	3	22
K	26	2	7	15
1	10	0	2	5
2	10	0	2	7
3	6	0	0	5
4	5	1	2	4
5	9	1	1	8
6	14	2	3	13
7	3	0	1	2
8	0	0	0	0
Totals	162	15	38	126*

**Some families declined our offer for enrollment, therefore were removed from wait list.*

Curriculum Design and Instructional Method and Modification

During the 2013-2014 school year, there were no modifications made to the original charter. Side by Side was founded around a social justice mission that places social studies at the core of an interdisciplinary curriculum. With the adoption of the Common Core state Standards, Side By Side teachers and administrators, with continued support from C.E.S., have been deeply engaged in revising old units, creating new units and designing assessments in order to meet the demands of the new standards. Based on the timelines outlined in our formal curriculum review plan, we continued implementing our ongoing curriculum review process and revising the curriculum accordingly; areas of revision for the 2013-2014 school year focused primarily on developing complex learning activities and performance task assessments to prepare our students for the Smarter Balanced Assessments and college and career readiness. These units, aligned with Ct Social Studies Frameworks, the Common Core State Standards for Language Arts, as well as various interdisciplinary standards from the sciences, the arts, and technology, are the foundation for our transition to the common core. Using Wiggins and McTighe's Understanding by Design Model, particular attention is being paid to vertical alignment and the integration of increasingly complex activities that purposefully connect to local and global community contexts, and to Webb's Depth of Knowledge criteria. Examples of grade level themes and topics include looking at the relationships between people, the environment and the economy through the decisions that are made by studying the oyster, whaling and the auto industries comparatively, looking at both the movements of people and the environmental impact. The primary objective of all curriculum work at Side By Side Charter School is to design rigorous, interdisciplinary and conceptually engaging units that maintain fidelity to the school's mission of enacting a constructivist pedagogy grounded in a social justice philosophy.

In all curricular areas, we continued our efforts to vertically align curriculum in the content areas in order to allow for consistent achievement expectations and seamless academic advancement, attending to the new expectations outlined in the Common Core. We also planned embedded professional development models that would meet the common core needs teacher collaboration for purposes of developing concept based assessment. Teacher leaders and the curriculum coordinator continued participation in the CES Assessment Consortium in order to collaborate with other RESC districts in creating Smarter Balance aligned learning activities, Common Formative Assessments and Performance Tasks that will provide teachers, student and families with the assessment data needed to enhance achievement in all areas. New knowledge gained from this consortium has been shared with the colleagues in a workshop model to ensure the creation of quality curriculum and rigorous assessment at all grade levels.

The 2013-2014 school year also marks a planning year for a new course to be offered in the fall of 2014. This course, designed to meet the rigors of the numerous research production and presentation proficiencies embedded in the Common Core State Standards, will give students time to engage in authentic research experiences that lead to a deeper understanding of inquiry based learning. Entitled, "Research and portfolio seminar," portfolios will become a central component of a Side By Side's middle school education program. In order to create portfolios, Side By Side students will be required to collect, revise, refine and reflect on a variety of materials. Because of this, portfolios create a three-dimensional view of students that show their achievement, growth, and tenacity as learners. The portfolio at Side By Side will also be a way for students to demonstrate their understanding of the mission of Side By Side, a commitment to social justice. Additionally, as they develop research and project based learning skills throughout the purposefully designed stages of portfolio development beginning in grade 5, they will be able to evidence, by 8th grade, that they are prepared for the next stage of their academic careers and that

they are developing the 21st century skills required for a diverse and rapidly changing world. Thus in 5th, 6th and 7th grades, students will assemble Working Portfolios. Working Portfolios are a collection of the best work a student has completed in his or her current grade level, a discipline specific, social justice project, and ten annotated bibliographies that document the individual reading a student completes during a year. Working Portfolios will then be used as the basis of Student Led Presentations and are stored on site at the end of a school year. These portfolios will serve to demonstrate a student's level of proficiency in Side By Side's standards-based and social justice themed curriculum which is aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Students use their Working Portfolios to create Gateway Portfolios, the culminating experience for 8th grade students. The term "gateway" is used to indicate that, through the successful completion of a portfolio, the student is ready to pass onto the next level of his or her educational career. In addition to the materials included in the Working Portfolio, students completing Gateway Portfolios must also include other materials that require evidence of preparation for high school, Side By Side's core values, and the development of 21st century skills

As always, the mission of Side By Side is unique and reflective of the cultural needs of the Side By Side community, and so much work has been done to ensure that the alignment and structure of the curriculum remains loyal to the founding values and goals of the school. As we continue our implementation to the common core state standards, we are working to ensure a program that provides all of our students the necessary skills for a successful transition to high school, as well as college and career readiness.

School Goals

I. Educational Progress of Students

Goal A: Students in Grades 3 through 8 will demonstrate continuous progress on the Connecticut Mastery Test:

Measurable Objective A.1: *Achievement data will exemplify consistent and significant individual student progress in Reading, Writing and Mathematics based upon vertical scale scores on the CT Mastery Tests.*

Measurement Tool: No tools available for the 2013-2014 school year

Benchmark: n/a

Progress in Meeting the Goal: N/A

Modification in Goal/Objectives for the 2012-13 School Year: N/A

Improvements Planned for 2014-15: As we anticipate full administration of the Smarter Balanced Assessments, the following improvements have been planned in order to accelerate student achievement.

Extra classroom support: In grades K-8, students scoring below proficiency on school level assessments will continue to receive Title I support in the form of in class and/or out-of-class tutoring. The goal of this practice is to provide students with support while they are in their actual learning environment, leading to more effective instructional supports. Additionally, students in all grades identified as struggling based on curriculum based assessments will also receive targeted instructional support in the form of scientifically research based interventions such as Lexia Reading and the Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention. Math supports include TERC Investigations differentiated lessons, as well as Kathy Richardson's skill based Developing Number Concepts.

Scientifically Research Based Interventions (SRBI): In addition to extra classroom support and tutoring, and in the spirit of *No Child Left Behind*, Side By Side began implementing structured, scientifically research based literacy interventions in the spring of 2009. These interventions included the Fountas and Pinnell *Leveled Literacy Intervention System*, as well multiple site licenses for *Lexia Reading* home and school software. These reading programs continued to be made available to students during the 2013-2014 school year who benefit from literacy instruction beyond the general education curriculum. Additionally, developed with our consultant from Literacy, HOW, Side by Side continues to implement compulsory assessments and interventions for students reading below grade level that assess the full range of literacy scopes and sequences (oral language, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, etc.) and serves as a diagnostic for students that are not responding to guaranteed traditional interventions. In Mathematics, students will receive support using TERC Investigations differentiated lessons in Tier 2. Students who do not respond to this intervention will be assessed in Tier 3 using Kathy Richardson's Assessing Number Concepts interview protocols and provided instruction using the accompanying Developing Number Concepts intervention series.

Extended Learning: In addition to Title I support, students performing below grade level have the opportunity to participate in an extended learning program with their general education teacher to receive targeted, individualized instruction based on current performance levels. Students work with their teachers individually or in small groups in order to accelerate progress.

Measurable Objective A.2: *Students will make adequate yearly progress in Reading, Writing and Mathematics in accordance with guidelines established by the CT State Department of Education with respect to the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act*

Measurement Tool: N/A

Benchmark: N/A

Progress in Meeting the Goal: Exceeded target in all areas Spring 2012-Spring 2013 data not yet released

Modification in Goal/Objectives for the 2012-13 School Year: /A

Side by Side is awaiting guidance from CSDE regarding SBAC baseline data to contribute to establishing School Performance Targets. Side By Side is in compliance with all waiver criteria.

Measurable Objective B.1: 80% of students will score at grade level by the end of the school year.

Measurement Tool: *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment*

Benchmark: 80% proficiency school wide

Progress in Meeting the Goal: 74.5% school average

Kindergarten: 86% with 82% above grade level

Grade 1: 70% at grade level with 45% above grade level

Grade 2: 78% at grade level with 41% above grade level

Grade 3: 74% with 43% above grade level

Grade 4: 70% with 38% above grade level

Grade 5: 60% with 20% above grade level

While we did not meet our target as measured by the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark literacy assessment, most grades show 70% or better of our students reading at grade level, with the exception being the fifth grade class. A significant amount of our students scoring proficient on this assessment are reading significantly ABOVE grade level. The remaining percentages of students not yet demonstrating grade level reading ability receive significant, scientifically research based reading interventions in order to assist them in achieving grade level proficiency. These interventions occur outside the core reading block so that they may supplement and not substitute the high quality core reading instruction that all Side By Side students receive. Additionally, students reading below grade level will be given individual reading goals based on SRBI assessments that will be progress monitored through the school wide data team process. This process occurs with parental involvement. Teachers have been trained in scientifically research based reading instruction that includes all the components of a balanced literacy program, including fluency, phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and written expression.

Improvements Planned for 2014-2015:

While all teachers have been trained in data driven decision making and the data team's model of school improvement, our one class per grade creates unique challenges for analyzing student work and planning instructional strategies. As a result, this year Side By Side partner teachers will meet weekly with the Curriculum and Assessment Coordinator in order to analyze student data, create performance tasks aligned with the curriculum, and develop assessment schedules for screenings, benchmarks and formative assessments in all grades in literacy and math. Data will be disaggregated in order to plan next instructional steps collaboratively, and progress monitoring will be systematic. It is believed that by implementing a

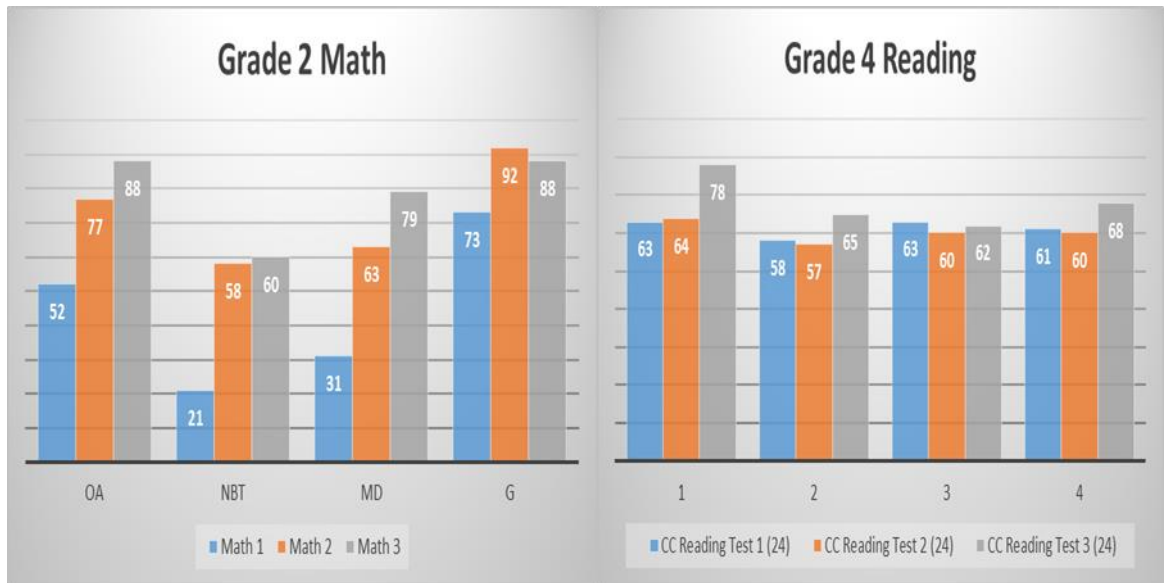
coaching model during the transition to the common core, teachers will be better supported making instructional decisions and enhancing students’ learning experiences, leading to higher levels of achievement.

Goal C: All students in Grades K-4 will participate and progress in the school’s Blue Ribbon Assessment.

Progress in Meeting the Goal: 100% of students participated in the school’s benchmark assessment. Evidence of accomplishments will be demonstrated by:

- Continuous, longitudinal growth across the three annual administrations
- Valid and reliable data will be provided in order to triangulate with other methods of data collection
- Analysis will indicate a correlation between classroom assessments, state standardized test scores when available, and Blue Ribbon Assessment scores
- Increased parental involvement in achievement discussions due to the dissemination of parent reports three times a year

The Blue Ribbon Benchmark Assessment allows for a juxtaposition of multiple data sources in order to accelerate school improvement. By administering this benchmark three times a year, teachers and school leaders are provided with timely, interim data that now aligns with the Common Core State Standards. What follows are some samples of our new data sources demonstrating student growth. By administering this assessment in 2nd and 3rd grades, we now have comprehensive, standards aligned achievement data for students almost two years prior to the administration of CMT’s, and this data is available three times a year in report form for parents. During the 2013-2014 school year, we also continued using Blue Ribbon data to provide specific strand data for Tier I and Tier 2 instruction. Below is a snapshot of our 2013 year end data. While our growth is not as impressive as in recent years on this assessment, it was the first year students were instructed in the CCSS, and as a result teachers were receiving professional development around the new curriculum, as well as teaching pre-requisite skills alongside the formal curriculum.





II. Accomplishment of Mission, Purpose and Specialized Focus

Goal A. We will create a learning environment that promotes social justice.

Objective: *All Side by Side students will demonstrate an increased awareness of social justice issues at an age appropriate level, as measured through student projects and/or journal writing, community involvement, conflict resolution, peer mediation, and success with RISE Expectations and guidelines, as described below.*

Measurement Tool: Observation of journal entry choices, review of student projects, student engagement (numbers of students and investment in projects) in community service and school wide projects, observation of students demonstrating principles of conflict resolution strategies outside the classroom lessons, and measurement of growth regarding individual RISE goals, as described below.

Benchmark: All students will use language that reflects an understanding of the concepts of Respect, Independence, Social Justice, and Empathy (RISE). All students will participate in classroom and community projects focusing on social justice. Students will demonstrate an ownership of school norms and expectations by taking an active role in community building activities. Students will demonstrate, and be acknowledged for, growth in both personal and school-wide RISE Goals.

Progress in Meeting the Goal:

We successfully continued our school-wide community building and school climate program known as RISE into its third year. RISE stands for Respect, Independence, Social Justice, and Empathy. RISE is within a positive behavioral intervention and support (PBIS) framework which is interwoven throughout the entire school. Introduction to the four concepts of RISE began on the first day of school in the 2013-2014 school year, and, within its established framework, it was followed by the first monthly All-School RISE Meeting 4 weeks later. During the 2013-2014 school year, the fourth grade class participated in an active year-long project in which they identified climate goals for themselves as a class as well as an action plan that the group committed to. For grades 2-4, the Side by Side staff continued the RISE Challenge program which offered the students community building enrichment activities and provided recognition for continued student development in RISE-like character qualities.

The Social Studies curriculums for our Upper School students during the 2013-2014 school year continued to focus on human rights both in the exploration of current events and the study of history. The study units

emphasized the Reformation Period, Slavery, the American Civil War, the Reconstruction Period, World War II, the Holocaust, and Civil Rights. The studies culminated in a double overnight trip to Washington, D.C. Students also attended a day trip to The Jewish Museum in New York. Children were actively engaged in a reflective process of the content through journaling, small group discussions, debate, and poetry writing. The curriculum material was interwoven with the study of recent and current civil rights issues. Students were engaged in critical thinking, as they considered current global conditions, as well as personal experiences, as they relate to these issues. Students spoke openly about their own experiences, as members of their own ethnic groups and society at large, about the personal impact of global issues on themselves and their families. Students also viewed films and participated in lessons about farming, nutrition, and the ethics and human rights issues that are affected by the processes in which we get our food.

Our Student School Planning Team (SSPT) completed its ninth year with continued success. It is a student run committee, with two staff advisors, that organizes school-wide programs, surveys the needs of the students, and establishes community service projects. The SSPT is responsible for daily morning announcements, which foster a strong sense of school community. In the announcements, life milestone events and accomplishments of other students are acknowledged, as well as significant school community events information. Through school-wide programs such as Spirit Week, students' positive identities as community members are supported, and this sense of unity reinforces the students' personal investment in the mission of our school. On a monthly basis, the SSPT organized the All-School RISE Meetings, which focus on the themes of Respect, Independence, Social Justice, and Empathy. At the All-School RISE Meetings, classes share students' work and interpretations of these qualities with the entire school through music, art, drama, dance, and games. Parents, guardians, and families are included in our All-School RISE Meetings, and their participation at the RISE Meetings provided meaningful reinforcement of these themes both at home and at school.

The SSPT continued to be active in facilitating and promoting the annual food drives designated to the Norwalk Open Arms Emergency Shelter as well as our own families who were in need of food supplies. The younger students in our lower school continued their annual traditional drive to benefit the local animal shelter.

Our fourth and fifth graders participated in the Save the Children's World Marathon challenge, in which students took active ownership of fundraising and ran laps extensively to raise money for this organization.

Jump Rope for Heart Day took place again this past year, in February, as part of our Physical Education and Health Curriculum. Through this awareness and fundraising effort, students gained a deeper awareness of the impact of medical illness on families and their sense of themselves as agents in the prevention of chronic illness and in improving the lives of the affected individuals and families.

Our practice in addressing disciplinary matters reflects our dedication to social justice, empathy, and instilling a strong sense of community among our students. We use a team approach to address disciplinary issues, where the Director, Social Worker, Teacher(s), and Parents/Guardians work with the student on examining the behavior and making reparations to the other student and or the school community. We formulate a response plan to address the needs of all children involved, as well as the school community, as the actions of a few often have a significant impact on the larger community. We value parental involvement in this process and parents have engaged in role plays, vignette discussions, and other problem solving strategies with their children in response to behavioral needs that have come up. Students practice conflict resolution and peer mediation skills. When appropriate, the children involved in a conflict address their class to share their newly honed conflict resolution skills once the conflict is resolved to reinforce closure and a positive, successful experience among them. The class then participates in a conflict resolution lesson where all children are involved in role plays, skits, and activities to promote these skills.

Within these classroom programs, students are actively engaged in contributing their ideas for solutions and agreed upon guidelines for courteous and RISE-like behavior.

Our Upper School grades 6-8 participated in interactive assembly programs with guest presenters that included Team Black Out and the Norwalk High School Peer Players. The presenters led activities that involved the students in improvisation, role playing, theatre exercises, physical endurance activities, and self-expression to promote life skills, values clarification, character-building, and resilience.

Chemical dependency and substance abuse have a pervasive interrelationship with the many issues that impact matters of social justice: public health, the economy, disenfranchisement, violence, crime, and juvenile crime. Social justice promotes protective factors which aid in the prevention of substance abuse, and a drug-free community is a safer environment that would be more equipped to support the values of social justice. We continued to implement the Courage to Speak Foundation Substance Abuse Prevention Education programs in our Upper School. The 5th grade participated in Sunny's Story, which poignantly described a family's experience with substance abuse through the perspective of the family dog. The 7th grade participated in the adolescent drug prevention curriculum. At the Norwalk community-wide Courage to Speak Family Night, all 5th and 7th grade artwork and essays were displayed, and 5 of our Side by Side students publicly presented their essays. The program also offered the Courageous Parenting series which was open to all Side by Side parents. Courageous Parenting, Family Night, and the Courage to Speak curriculum teach our students and families about the dangers of substance abuse, the rights of children and teens to remain drug free, learning refusal skills, and ways to get help.

We are very pleased to have launched our first Side by Side partnership with the D.A.R.E. Program this past year. Sixth and Eighth Graders participated in this 3-month long curriculum provided by the Norwalk Police Department in partnership with our Health and Physical Education Teacher. The program culminated with a Graduation attended in the evening by families, community officials, Police, and Side by Side staff.

Our seventh and eighth graders continued with their Poetry Café tradition this past year, which took place at Barnes and Noble in Westport. This event continued to be very well-attended by students, families, and community members. This year, the musical component of this event expanded to include more students and more musical performances. Our students' authored poems addressing issues including tolerance, war, poverty, violence, politics, human rights, pop culture, and family values. This process of thoughtfully writing and sharing their poems provided students with the opportunity to take meaningful risks in expressing different facets of themselves. This experience led to students becoming further defined in their positions on social justice and global issues. Some of our students applied contents learned in history class to their poetry. The opportunity to present their work publicly in this venue proved a life changing moment for many of our students. This has become an opportunity for students who are not as confident academically to really shine in the area of poetry and personal creativity. It has had a tremendous impact on their identity as students.

Our Music Education Program, from Pre-K3s through 8th grade, incorporated many themes of social justice in their songs and musical performances. Our music teacher, Ms. Angela Nida, is a Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Reserves, and she provided our students with an exceptional opportunity to learn about Social Justice through integrating thematic learning experiences on Memorial Day and Armed Forces Day. Additionally in our Music Education Program, instrument lessons became more accessible to families, regardless of their ability to pay, through our partnership with the Family Resource Center and the implementation of scholarship funding.

Modification in Goal/Objectives for the 2013-2014 School Year: No modifications.

Improvements Planned for 2014-15: We plan to further understand and address the school climate needs of our student community, with an emphasis on the theme of social justice, through analysis of student feedback through surveys, advisory shares, and individual anecdotes.

Goal B. We will support the needs of our families

Objective: *To continue to offer our students the opportunity to attend our Extended Day and Early Room Programs along with providing our parents with informative monthly workshops and weekly playgroups.*

Measurement Tools: Attendance at Early Room and Extended Day Programs, Playgroups, and Parent Workshops. Numbers of enrollment in the PAT Program. Parent Evaluation Surveys. Attendance to measure increased overall parental involvement.

Benchmark: Needs of families addressed in ways that will promote student academic success. This includes need for childcare, basic necessities such as heat, food, and housing, social services and mental health, and families' participation as partners in their child's learning.

Progress in Meeting the Goal:

Current Status:

All of our families have access to the services of our Family Resource Center, regardless of their financial status. Although our population is diverse racially and economically, the needs are similar for two working parent or single working parent families. These families utilize our Family Resource Center's Early Room and Extended Day programs. Over 30 students attended the Extended Day program while over 50 students were enrolled in the Early Room. A professional artist taught a weekly arts & crafts course, and we offered karate by a certified Black Belt instructor, as well as a Yoga class taught by a certified Yoga instructor. Other Extended Day activities included: indoor and outdoor sports, story times and related crafts. If a parent or family is attending a conference or meeting held at school during Early Room or Extended Day hours, their child may attend the program free of charge on that day during the time the parent(s) are required to attend the meeting.

Through our affiliation with the Parents as Teachers program, we hosted 33 weekly bi-lingual baby and toddler early learning groups for our parents to promote socialization and early school readiness skills. Our three certified parent educators conducted a total of 27 personal visits to 12 parents (and 14 children) to further support their parenting, children's socialization and school readiness skills. We collaborated again with a local Birth to Three agency in promoting our early learning groups and co-facilitating their structure which included a special emphasis for some of our developmentally delayed children. Over 32 children were enrolled in this program.

Modification in Goal/Objectives for the 2013-2014 School Year: No modifications made this past year.

Improvements Planned for 2014-2015: Increase participation in the CT Food Bank's BackPack Program.

Objective: *To increase percentage of students/families serviced by the Social Worker as measured by the Social Worker's Log.*

Measurement Tool: Social Worker's Log

Benchmark: All students and families to have access to social learning programs, support, and referrals as needed.

Progress in Meeting the Goal:

Record of Service:

2010-2011	145 of 163 families
2011-2012	148 of 164 families
2012-2013	151 of 160 families
2013-2014	153 of 160 families

The Social Worker at Side by Side has a varied and flexible role, thereby wearing “a lot of hats”. The work with our students and families ranges from direct counseling to peer leadership activities to enrichment scholarship referrals. The variety of venues enables the social worker to remain openly accessible to the school community helping students and parents to feel comfortable seeking help when needed. Support groups and services for children and families address issues that include chronic illness, trauma, and separation from parents and foster care placement, divorce, substance abuse, separation from family members due to military leave, and multifamily early childhood education. We continued to provide a school-based bereavement support group in partnership with Center for Hope/ The Den for Grieving Kids. We conducted classroom based sessions on community building and addressed issues such as bullying prevention, tolerance, and respect. Our school social worker is a certified Parent Educator through the Parents as Teachers Program for children ages birth to five. Our social worker assisted families in accessing health insurance, fuel assistance, clothing, and legal advocacy services. Mental health, crisis intervention, and social service referrals were regularly implemented.

Our Social Worker co-facilitates the Child Study Team process, and presents at Collaborative Team Conferences, 504 Plan Meetings, PPTs, positive youth development activities, and parent workshops. She regularly coordinates referrals, and scholarship assistance with school and community-based enrichment programs. We continued our partnership with New York University, through which we continue to receive yearly MSW Interns to conduct their field placements here at Side by Side.

This past year, our Social Worker and one of our MSW Interns conducted a needs assessment with our families regarding summer child care needs. We developed a comprehensive list of summer programs and advocated for camp scholarships for our families in the most need. The list is in our data base and was made available to all of our families. Children attended scholarship-granted programs at Horizons in New Canaan and Norwalk and Earthplace in Westport, among others.

Our Social Worker continued to co-chair the RISE Team meetings, participated in Behavioral and facilitated an advisory group with a group of children who needed an additional level of support and monitoring. Our Social Worker was part of the Advisory Planning Team, and she coordinated the implementation of several units of the Advisory Curriculum related to social and emotional well-being, career planning, and positive youth development.

Modification in Goal/Objective for the 2013-14 School Year: No modifications made this past year.

Objective: *Parents will participate in all Child Study Team (CST) meetings, Collaborative Team Conferences, and 504 Plan Meetings.*

Measurement Tool: Meeting log and attendance record.

Benchmark: 100% parent attendance at CST, 504 Plan Meetings, and Collaborative Team Conferences.

Current Status:

The Child Study Team is co-facilitated by the Student Services Coordinator and the School Social Worker. In addition to the facilitators, the Team consists of the, Director, Classroom Teacher, School Nurse, and the Parent(s) of the Student being discussed. Through the CST, the team discusses difficulties a child might be having academically, socially or emotionally, either in school or at home. It is an opportunity to bring multidisciplinary perspectives together to help a child. The Team meets as often as it needs to until a resolution has been found, usually in six to eight week cycles. The outcomes of Child Study Team meetings sometimes include referrals for PPTs or 504 Plan Meetings.

Collaborative Team Conferences take place often in response to more immediate acute or emergent situations, such as a medical issue, a family crisis, a behavioral issue, or a social/emotional concern affecting a child's attendance and capacity to participate successfully at school. They can be initiated by school faculty, parents, or outside service providers when applicable and with the consent of the parent. Outcomes of Collaborative Team Conferences have included referral to the Child Study Team Process, referral for support services, behavioral contracts, positive youth development activities, and ongoing collaborative service plans. This past year, we held 18 Child Study Team Meetings, 40 Collaborative Team Conferences, and 1 504 Plan Meetings. The CST process is typically initiated through planned data team discussions and systemic assessments, and our Collaborative Team Conferences are used particularly when immediate intervention plans are needed or to proactively address an emerging concern. We had 100% parent attendance this year at all CST, Collaborative Team Conferences, and 504 Plan meetings this past year. We continued to actively include the parents in the scheduling process and apply flexibility to the meeting times, and this helped to sustain an increased level of parent attendance at meetings, which tended to transfer to an overall increase in school participation in other events such as workshops and family activities.

Modification in Goal/Objectives for the 2013-14 School Year: No modifications made this past year.

Improvements Planned for 2014-15: An updated survey was sent to all parents over the summer. Staff will review the survey results and make recommendations for an action plan to address all areas of need. We will partner with our PTCO Co-Chairs to implement a plan to further increase parent involvement that is based on the results of the survey and related recommendations. This will occur in collaboration among the Parent Community Coordinator, teachers, social work team, and Family Resource Center staff.

Goal C. We will promote character and responsibility in our students.

Objective: 100% of all Side by Side students will successfully participate in community projects in their classroom or school as measured by teacher's reports and feedback from the school community.

Measurement Tool: Number of students attending extracurricular community service projects and number of projects completed within and outside of the school day.

Benchmark: Each student will participate in a meaningful community service project. The number of hours and nature of the project will be determined based on age appropriateness and connection to curriculum themes.

Progress in Meeting the Goal:

Current Status:

We continue our tradition and practice of every classroom deciding on a community project. Tasks are divided and each student has a role. The emphasis and valuing of community service begins in the preschool grades, with our three-to-five-year-olds participating in weekly jobs, such as planting and caring for the school's community garden. This past year, our preschoolers continued their tradition, in line with their curriculum, of opening a school wide "pet store", which culminated in a drive to benefit the local

animal shelter. The preschoolers also conducted a Butterfly Study in which they raised caterpillars in habitats to be released as butterflies destined to Mexico. Within each classroom's curriculum, each grade focuses on a project to engage the entire school, for example the in-house Post Office and Bakery, experiences through which concepts of math, science, social studies, health, and nutrition are reinforced. We continued to collaborate with local organizations such as the Seaport Association and the Maritime Aquarium in community service projects and through this partnership establish learning enrichment activities. Our third grade set up a Science Fair Museum showcased to the entire school and to families at an evening event. Through our partnership with the Westport Art Center, our second grade set up an Art Museum which was showcased to the entire school and to families.

Through the organization efforts of our Upper School Student School Planning Team, our students continue to be actively involved in coordinating school-wide events such as the Harvest Fair and Grandparents/Special Persons Day, Multicultural Night, Beautification Day, and All-School Meetings. The Student School Planning Team (SSPT), run by our Upper School Students has functioned as a community service committee within the school, and they assess the needs of the school from the students' perspective. They design and implement classroom and school-wide social and community service activities. Our school-wide buddy program continued this year, and both older and younger students got a great deal out of the mentoring relationship where older children worked with younger children. Our above mentioned Jump Rope for Heart Day was another example of a community service project this year that was also connected to the Health Curriculum, where students learned about significant heart-health issues through this experience of community service and physical activity. This past year, our Upper School Students again continued to organize community service projects and events, including continuing the traditions of food and clothing drives for our local Emergency Shelter; assisting our elementary grade students during our Annual Beautification Day; and mentoring younger students during lunch and recess times and through our Buddy Program. Our Student School Planning Team continued with our tradition of School Spirit Week, and one of the school spirit themes was community service, which culminated in an all-school meeting celebrating the service projects. As mentioned above, our Fourth and Fifth Graders actively participated in the Save the Children's World Marathon Challenge.

Modification in Goal/Objectives for the 2013-14 School Year: No modifications applied to this objective.

Improvements Planned for 2014-15: Through small groups within our Upper School Advisory Program, students will form committees in which they will identify community service activities of interest and then structure the implementation of these projects. They will continue to plan for outreach to local community agencies such as Person to Person and the South Norwalk Community Center, and we will identify more opportunities for community service projects that are student-driven.

Objective: 100% of all Side by Side sixth, seventh and eighth graders will successfully participate in weekly service learning projects in the Norwalk community as documented by teacher checklists, student journals and performance reviews.

Measurement Tool: Teacher checklists, student journals, performance reviews.

Benchmark: All students will participate in the buddy system weekly in mentoring younger children. All 5th and 7th grade students will provide artwork and letters for the community-wide substance abuse prevention initiative with the Courage to Speak Foundation. All 6-8 grade students will work on the Community Garden. Upper school students will organize and participate in food drives and drives to benefit the local animal shelter. They will assist at community events such as the Harvest Fair and International Night.

Progress in Meeting the Goal:

Our Buddy System continued to be a very positive experience for both adolescents and younger children. Upper-schoolers worked with younger students in their classrooms helping them with their classwork, guiding them with projects such as tie-dying T-shirts for Field Day, taking on the peer-leader role in assisting with Field Day Activities, and assisting younger children with art work. The children developed meaningful relationships with their “buddies” and our older children enjoyed the experience of being role models. Our Upper School students assisted with organizing community service projects such as the food and clothing drives for our local Emergency Shelter, gardening projects culminating with the Annual Beautification Day. Upper School Students assisted with the set up and running of events such as Harvest Fair, International Night, etc. Side by Side Upper School students’ work was represented at the Courage to Speak Foundation Program during the city-wide Family Night, and 4 of our students publicly presented their essays. Upper School students who displayed exemplary qualities in their RISE Goals were given the responsibility of assisting in the lower school classrooms on a regular basis.

Modifications in Goal/Objectives for the 2013-14 School Year: No modifications.

Improvements Planned for 2014-15: Through our Student School Planning Team and school-wide student and family surveys, we will continue to add to our list of service projects based on needs assessment and student/family interests. This year, we plan to further develop and implement Student Success Plans for our Upper School Students, grades 6-8, which will consist of individualized student goals and small advisory groups. This forum will provide meaningful opportunities to support and expand on students’ commitments to community service projects and their sense of responsibility to themselves and their community.

III. Efforts to Reduce Racial, Ethnic and Economic Isolation and to Increase the Racial and Ethnic Diversity of the Student Body

Goal: We will maintain a student body of urban and suburban families that is racially, ethnically and economically diverse.

Objective: *A minimum of 20% of our student body will come from suburban communities by October 1st as measured by our Student Roster and our Strategic School Profile.*

Current Status:

15% of our students come from communities outside of Norwalk (Bridgeport, Milford, Norwalk, Stamford, Stratford, Trumbull and Weston), with a total of 36 regional students, which is a 1% increase from the previous school year.

Objective: *As determined in our original charter, we will strive to maintain an overall student body that successfully represents the ethnic, racial and socioeconomic diversity of the residing towns of our students. This is measured by our Student Roster and Strategic School Profile.*

Current Status:

For 2010-2011: white 27%	minority 73%
For 2011-2012: white 27%	minority 73%
For 2012-2013: white 27%	minority 73%
For 2013-2014: white 25%	minority 75%

Objective: We will support the needs of the bilingual families at our school and in the surrounding community by providing bilingual informational workshops, early learning groups and personal visits.

As previously mentioned, 33 bilingual early learning groups were conducted throughout the year for our Spanish speaking parents, caregivers and their toddler children. Our bi-lingual certified parent educator also met with five Spanish speaking parents on a monthly basis to help them with their parenting skills. They were invited to attend monthly meetings on such topics as flu prevention and school readiness. Free Saturday morning ESL classes were taught by a certified ESL teacher. Over 14 adult students attended 23 classes. By the end of the program, these parents reported that they felt more confident in helping their children with their homework and attending parent-teacher conferences plus they were able to learn vocabulary for their jobs. We hosted a bi-lingual "Driving Safety" workshop given by a Spanish speaking community police officer. We also held a four- week Raising Readers program in Spanish for five Spanish speaking parents. Parents received a free Spanish book at each session and learned the importance of reading to children to foster a lifelong love of reading.

Through our FRC partnership with the Norwalk Police Department, a bilingual Domestic Violence Education Workshop was provided at Side by Side in the evening, with speakers from the Domestic Violence Crisis Center, the District Attorney's Office, the Police, and Superior Court.

Efforts to Effectively Attract, Enroll and Retain Students from Among High Need Populations

Effectively attracting students from ALL of the specified “high-need” populations is inherent to the mission of Side by Side. Since our inception, our mission, focus and roots in the South Norwalk community have resulted in a diverse student population.

Programs and Services put in place to retain students from among high need populations:

- Collaborate with summer programs to secure summer camp scholarships for high needs families
- Collaborate with Norwalk Housing Authority, Carver Center, Horizons School-Year Program, FCA Afterschool Program, etc., to track students’ academic progress and social/emotional/family needs
- Administration of the Backpack Program which provides weekend food staple items to food-insecure students
- Provision of food baskets to families in need through donations through Al’s Angels as well as community giving.
- Collaboration with local social service organizations including Family and Children’s Agency, Mid-Fairfield Child Guidance Center, and the Center for Hope to ensure coordination of services for families.
- Providing bilingual translations at parent conferences and Child Study Team meetings.
- Providing school-based Grief and Loss counseling in partnership with Center for Hope/Den for Grieving Children.
- Providing groups addressing social skills, communication, coping with anxiety, family transitions/divorce, Lunchbunch, team players, chronic illness in the family.
- Substance abuse prevention education.
- Providing translators and childcare at open houses.
- Partnering with family-based programs, such as the MOMS Program at Family and Children’s Agency, to participate in community events open to, and often driven by, our Side by Side family participants.
- Side by Side Staff and Parent/Family participation in community-wide events, conversations, and Focus Groups, for instance “Helping All Children Succeed in a Diverse Society”, hosted by the Norwalk Early Childhood Council and community partners.

In addition, our Family Resource Center (FRC) is an established and effective tool for providing the necessary resources to families of these populations to ensure their comfortability with our program.

Our “Parents As Teachers” program (a component of the FRC) focuses on supporting parents of children prenatal to age five with high need characteristics. As discussed elsewhere in this report, this program served five high needs families with monthly visits from a certified parent educator. Parents receive developmental information on their children, and Ages & Stages screenings are conducted. Referrals are made to Birth to 3 if appropriate. Parents and their children were also encouraged to attend weekly early learning groups which not only support parenting skills but allow parents to form friendships within the school and surrounding communities. A four- week Raising Readers program conducted in Spanish in the fall promoted the importance of literacy and the power of speaking one’s native language at home. Participants received a free children’s book in Spanish at each session. Side by Side also collaborated with the Connecticut Food Bank serving 30 food-insecure children with weekend non-perishable food packages throughout the school year. This program not only provides healthy, child friendly food, it reduces the stress parents experience in feeding

their children with limited financial resources. Our Uniform Exchange also eases the financial burden of parents because they can obtain gently used school uniforms at no cost.

Lastly—specific to ELL students—our adult ESL courses that are offered through our FRC helps parents learn English so that they are better able to navigate job and apartment hunting, homework help, etc. Plus, they form friendships in class.

Financial Information

Side by Side Charter School FY 15 - Annual Budget

Income	
Total Income	<u>3,055,284</u>
Expense	
6111A · Admin/supervisory salaries	251,127
6111B · Teachers	1,041,824
6112A · Teaching assistants	201,942
6119 · Other salaries	192,685
6200 · Employee Benefits	318,545
6321 · Tutors	31,500
6322 · Professional Development-Staff	14,500
6323 · Pupil Services	388,658
6323G · Extra-curricular	3,800
6324 · Field trips	23,500
6325 · Parent Activities	500
6330 · Professional Fees	86,374
6440 · Site costs	191,291
6530 · Telephone/communications	9,323
6531 · Printing and Reproduction	12,950
6590 · Other purchased services	88,827
6610 · Classroom Equipment	1,438
6611 · Instruct supplies-consumable	19,168
6612 · Administrative supplies	21,822
6614A · Books - Text	2,000
6615 · Dues & Memberships	6,093
6700 · Depreciation/amortization	90,000
6890 · Misc expenses	20,822
6900 · Purchase Discounts	(4,450)
7000 · Fundraising Expense - School	21,000
Total Expense	<u>3,035,239</u>
Net Income	<u><u>20,045</u></u>

Best Practices

Side by Side's Chosen Standard for 2013-14 Annual Report:

Curriculum and Instruction: *High-performing schools have vertically and horizontally aligned curricula with core learning expectations to improve the performance of all students. Students achieve high standards through rigorous, challenging learning. Staff delivers an aligned curriculum and implements research-based teaching and learning strategies. Students are actively involved in their learning through inquiry, in-depth learning and performance assessments.*

The 2013-2014 school year was a busy one for teachers and administrators in the areas of curriculum and instruction. Due to the mission and philosophy of Side By Side, teachers and Administration are collaboratively engaged in all areas of curriculum development and instructional implementation. Given the direction of public education in CT and nationwide, Side by Side administrators interpreted the call for CCSS implementation as an opportunity to design and/or revise and implement new, CCSS aligned curriculum units in pre-school through 8th grade that are, in keeping with our mission, interdisciplinary in nature, social justice themed, and contingent upon social constructivist pedagogies that foster children's inquisitiveness and incite curiosity through inquiry based learning activities. As a result, teachers worked in collaborative teams to develop vertically aligned units using Wiggins and McTighe's Understanding By Design model of curriculum development that emphasizes the importance of considering desired learning outcomes prior to developing units, products and processes, and the necessity of enduring understandings and essential questions that support learning transfer across contexts. An example of one of these units is a comparative study of the oyster industry in Norwalk, whaling in Mystic, and the auto industry in Detroit through the lens of "How do people make decisions that consider both economic and environmental needs?" All of this work included the development of unit aligned performance tasks and inquiry based projects, and fostered a culture of teacher collaboration and instructional coherence school wide.

In order to align the new curriculum, instructional foci and supervisory practices, in 2013-2014 our school goals were developed to support teachers' task of placing greater emphasis on non-fiction text. As a result, all teachers were provided embedded, collaborative professional development and resources around achieving our school wide goal of helping students be better able to derive reasons and evidence used by the author to make arguments and claims in a text. Additionally, a similar model of support was used to work toward our second goal, which was to enhance the cognitive rigor of content and lessons by engaging in explicit professional development and lesson plan alignment with Webb's Depth of Knowledge. Thus, in formal observations, walkthroughs, and reviews of practice, supervisory conversations focused on these instructional goals as a way to increase student outcomes by modeling, scaffolding and making explicit school goals for the purpose of promoting consistency and continuity of learning with the ultimate goal of improving student performance.

Lastly, during the 2013-2014 school year, Side By Side began a new partnership with the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art. Teachers participated in professional development, developing visual thinking strategies with students around art, and engaged in collaborations around the potential for art, science and mathematics inter-disciplinary connections. In the spring, the Aldrich was awarded grant funds to support an innovative museum school partnership entitled "Common Ground", of which Side By Side will be a full partner, along with Scotts Ridge Middle School in Ridgefield and Classical Magnet in Bridgeport. Artists, viewed by The Aldrich as inspirational creative thinkers with an ability to see the world through broad-reaching and cross-disciplinary perspectives, will work directly with students in a week-long classroom residency to explore ideas, make art, and take ownership of their learning experiences. The artists-in-residence also work with teachers, administrators, and Museum educators on innovative, common core

aligned curriculum development across subjects. The resources for teachers developed in this 2014/2015 pilot program will be adapted for use by the education community throughout the region.

Status of Charter Renewal Findings and Follow-up Activities

2013-14 School Year Update:

On June 1, 2011 Side by Side Charter School received notice from CSDE indicated that the “Charter of Side by Side has been renewed from July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2017.”

Upon receiving notice of the charter renewal, Side by side concurrently received a report of findings from the State-Appointed Renewal team (SAR Team). These findings included three specific “issues” in need of corrective “action to be taken.” Below is an update on the status of these issues, actions that have been taken (to date) and further actions that are scheduled or planned to take place in the future:

1. **Issue #1 noted by SAR team:** *The ELA curriculum for Side by Side’s grades 5-8 is not aligned to the CCSS or the GLEs in ELA. In addition, the science and social studies curriculum for grades 5-8 is not aligned to the Connecticut State Frameworks and GLEs.*

UPDATE: Immediately after the issue was noted, Side by Side teacher-led curriculum review committees were formed and the science and social studies curriculum have been aligned to the GLEs. Currently, the social studies frameworks, foundational to the schools mission, are being revised based on the Understanding By Design model. This model will enable truly interdisciplinary curricular units, as outlined in our charter. As this rigorous, concept based unit development continues, the ELA curriculum is being revised to align with both the CCSS and the new SBAC assessments. Much of the Language Arts content will be embedded in the larger social studies curriculum to ensure transfer of new knowledge and the acquisition of background knowledge. Concurrently, an exclusively Language Arts Scope and Sequence aligned to the Common Core has been developed. Since the SAR team visit, Side by Side’s curriculum review committees (made up of teachers and administration) have worked an extended school year to facilitate and expedite this process. These CCSS aligned curricular units are completed (although some will continue to be tweaked during implementation) and are current being implemented effective fall 2014.

2. **Issue #2 noted by SAR team:** *The SAR team found that the school’s data teams had not yet fully developed Common Formative Assessments in ELA, science and social studies.*

UPDATE: UPDATE: A complete battery of formative assessments was due to be complete for the spring of 2014. Due to the resource and time demands of our transition to the Common Core and SBAC, while most elements of our school wide assessment system have been finalized, we are still tweaking a few components as we roll out our CCSS aligned units in their entirety. As the curriculum units were designed and aligned to the CCSS and integrated into the Social Studies curriculum based on our school’s mission, we have developed Performance Tasks for more than half of the units and will have the other half complete by spring 2015.

Side By Side has also continued to work diligently since the renewal visit in both Data and Curriculum Teams to follow a curriculum revision schedule and to create and implement assured assessments at each grade level, as well as to refine the data team process to improve the quality of data sources and analysis. Since there is only one class per grade level here at SBS, a grade level team approach has proven not viable. Therefore, in data teams, looping partners, now with the support of administrators to coach through the transition, have been using dipstick strand data

aligned with CCSS curriculum and generated by Blue Ribbon, as well as other assured, curriculum based assessment data at each grade level in order to inform instruction and provide appropriate supports for students achieving below proficiency levels. In addition, systematic literacy screenings are now in place for data team focus in grades K-3 and Kathy Richardson's Assessing Number Concepts has been implemented to assess and progress monitor students that are receiving Tier 3 math support. Examples of other assessments being utilized are collaboratively created and chosen rubric based assessments that include science lab assessments as well as grade level skills checklists designed with our LiteracyHow consultant that ensure that each student is being evaluated in all areas of literacy at each grade level throughout the year. The F and P Benchmark Assessment also remains an integral data point in grades K-8, as these assessments are administered as interim assessments to the Blue Ribbon Reading Benchmark.

- 3. Issue #3 noted by SAR team:** *The SAR team determined that the (person in the position of) Supervisor of Student Services, Curriculum, Assessment and Intervention was performing duties which require a 092 certification.*

UPDATE: Immediately after this issue was noted in 2011 the staff member in this position enrolled in an Administrative/Ed. Leadership program at Quinnipiac University. During the period of coursework to attain this certification, all duties associated with curriculum development & revision, and provision of student services were overseen by a staff member who held the proper 092 certificate. Finally, in 2012 the staff member in the position of Supervisor of Student Services, Curriculum, Assessment and Intervention successfully completed the Ed. Leadership/Administration program and attained the proper 092 certificate required. This certificate is on file with CSDE and the resolution to this concern has been communicated to the Bureau of Certification.

Governance

Board of Directors—the 2013-14 Side by Side Board of Directors meetings were held once per month. All scheduled meetings were held on the 4th Tuesday of each month, and included a 15-minute public session.

Meetings held in 2013-14

8/27/13	12/3/13	3/25/14	6/11/14
9/24/13	1/24/14	4/22/14	
10/23/13	2/25/14	5/27/14	

All final Board Meeting minutes can be found in the “parent resource” section at www.sbscharter.org

Summary of Major Policy Decisions

- ✓ Based on student feedback from the previous school year, the Board of Directors met with Whitson’s Culinary Group, which agreed there was room for improvement; and have since enhanced school lunch offerings for middle school students, which now include a full service deli bar.
- ✓ SBS Board officially accepted administration’s proposal to adopt our in-house “Blue Ribbon” assessment as our standardized measure for the 2013-14 school year (while the CMT and SBAC are in transition) for the purposes of measuring achievement data for SEED
- ✓ The SBS Board submitted an application RFP for the “Charter School Facilities Grant” with the State Department of Education requesting a total of \$513,000 for 8 school facility projects.
- ✓ The SBS Board initiated and fully executed a 10+ year lease extension with our current lessor, St. Joseph’s Church. This lease amendment is effective immediately and will end in June of 2025
- ✓ The SBS Board posted a recommended policy change with regard to “Sick Day” usage and accrual for all Side by Side employees. The overall recommendation is to cap carryover of sick days at 150 for all 10- and 12-month employees. (The current policy does not have a cap). Due to the timing of this proposed change being posted for the school community, and the allowance of 30 days to pass prior to voting, the policy change will not be voted on until the 2014-15 academic year
- ✓ The SBS Board unanimously approved a proposed change to the middle school curriculum at Side by Side which would result in no longer offering Spanish as a foreign language to grade 5-8 students attending SBS. In place of Spanish a “Research and Portfolio” Seminar would be added as a p/t course for all students in grades 5-8.

Summary of Other Key Accomplishments

PDS partnership with Quinnipiac University

In 2013-14 Side by Side successfully continued its partnership agreement with the Quinnipiac School of Education. This partnership will include placement and training of QU interns in their classroom and, dual trainings for SBS and QU faculty. Of note, a collaborative team of faculty from both Quinnipiac University and Side by Side presented at the National Professional Development School Conference in Las Vegas Nevada. Their presentation consisted of demonstrating the model used between SBS and QU in providing teacher candidates opportunities for selecting authentic and genuine research practicum topics.

LEGOS/Robotics

In 2013-14 a team of students from Side by Side earned the coveted “Golden Ticket” which moved them on to the CT State Finals of the First Lego League Championship. Then, in the CT State Finals, the Side by Side team won 1st place for “Core Values”. This was an amazing and unprecedented accomplishment for a team in only its second year of existence.

Annual Gala Fundraiser

The Side by Side Annual Gala was held at a new venue in 2014. Over 100 guests enjoyed the offerings of the newly renovated Norwalk Inn and Conference Center while collectively helping to raise over \$20K for student programs at Side by Side.

Fall Wine Tasting

This fundraiser was held in early November at a local restaurant. Parents enjoyed fine wine, hors d’oeuvres, gourmet pizza and a raffle. All proceeds were used to fund the school field trip fund.

PAT, ESL and Raising Reader Programs

Side by Side continued to provide the Parents as Teacher (PAT) program as part of our Family Resource Center services. We host weekly bilingual early learning groups and monthly meetings on such topics as school readiness, flu prevention, and children’s safety, to name a few. 22 families were enrolled in this program and received individualized parenting information. Free Saturday morning ESL classes were voluntarily taught by a certified ESL teacher. This was a beginning level class, and the instructor catered classes to meet the needs of students. Before the start of each class, we offered coffee/tea and snacks to encourage informal conversation.

We also continued our Raising Readers Program for four weeks in the fall. Five Spanish speaking parents participated, learned the importance of reading to their children and enjoying a snack. This was a partnership with the City of Norwalk and United Way of Coastal Fairfield County.

Westport Arts Center Collaboration

This past school year, we renewed a partnership with the Westport Arts Center which provided funding to bring our second grade class via bus to their contemporary art gallery which hosted a Julian Schnabel exhibit. This 5-week program consisted of studying his work and using his work as inspiration to students’ artwork. The kids did an amazing job. This relationship will continue next year with the Westport Arts Center’s *Connections* program where a working artist will meet with the “now” third graders for six weeks.

Al's Angels Partnership

We partnered with the local non-profit organization Al's Angels which donated 40 bins of non-perishable food items in November to feed our families in need during Thanksgiving; parents also purchased grocery store gift cards to supplement the bins. Al's Angels donated another 40 bins of food in December. Seventy-one (71) students also received holiday gifts of toys, books and clothing from parent donations as part of our December Giving Tree program. Norwalk Firefighters Association donated \$250 which allowed us purchase more books and toys to serve an overwhelming number of students. Additionally, 40 oversized sand pails and shovels filled with treats for children were also donated to families in need in April thanks to the generosity of Al's Angels.

Parent Involvement

At Side by Side, parents participate in governance, volunteering and fund-raising. Parents serve as members on our Board of Directors, officers for our Parent Teacher Community Organization (PTCO), Classroom Parents and Fundraising/Social event committee chairs. They not only volunteer at our Scholastic book fairs, Picture Day, Harvest Fair, Family Fun Night, and Field Day, for example, but in the classroom, as chaperones for numerous field trips and outside to beautify our campus.

Food Services

After a group of middle school students lodged complaints the previous school year that they were unhappy with their daily lunch choices, staff and a long-time consultant to our school investigated the service and food provided to our school presented their findings to our Board of Directors, which was followed with a meeting with Whitsons Culinary Group (food services provider), an agreement was made and a deli cold-cut choice was added to the menu at the onset of the new school year.

Family Events

Side by Side hosts many family events including our Harvest Fair which brings our staff, parents and their children together for fun, fall-themed activities on a Saturday in October. The success of this annual event depends upon the cooperative spirit and active participation of teachers, parent volunteers and upper school students each year. These are all fun and inexpensive occasions for families to interact with one another and the SBS community. School events, along with our book fairs, are great opportunities for parents and grandparents to volunteer. We hosted an end-of-the-year breakfast to thank these parent volunteers. Grandparents/Special Friends were also treated to a performance of the SBS band.

Courage to Speak Program Participation includes community service opportunities for our students and a culminating program for all Side by Side families.

The Courage to Speak Substance Abuse Prevention Program continued to take place within our 5th and 7th grade health curriculum. Our students continued to participate in the community-wide Family Night which took place at West Rocks Middle School. Five selected students publicly presented their essays, and the entire 5th and 7th grades had their essays and artwork showcased at this event.

Launching of the D.A.R.E. Program at Side by Side

The Sixth and Eighth Graders participated in the D.A.R.E. substance abuse prevention education program, provided by the Norwalk Police in partnership with our Physical Education and Health Teacher. The program culminated in a graduation night attended by families with visiting community officials.

Fourth Annual International Night

Families shared their cultural and family recipes and the entire school community enjoyed a pot-luck style dinner and activities on a Friday night.

Parent Teacher Community Organization (PTCO)

In the last year, the SBS PTCO has experienced growth in terms of the level of participation and the role the group now plays in the community life of the school. This group was formally established under a set of by-laws, that details the election of PTCO officers and eligibility requirements, term lengths, and both duties and limits of responsibilities. In the second half of the year, several members agreed to take over the leadership of the group. PTCO members meet monthly, plan school based social events and fundraising activities and consistently appeal to members of the entire school community to become involved by volunteer at events and attending monthly meetings. Meeting times are consistent and are posted on the school website events calendar and in flyers that go home via backpack and email as well as posts to Facebook. Babysitting is also provided at every meeting. Membership is open to all parents and staff at Side by Side and there are no membership fees. As mentioned, the PTCO spearhead most of the fundraising and social activities for the school and report to the Board of Directors, while working in cooperation with the Parent Community Coordinator and the Director of Side by Side. The PTCO sponsors International Family Night in September, family fun nights at minor league hockey arenas, baseball stadiums, ice rinks and penny arcades. PTCO members also worked with the administration last year to boost attendance at several parent forums that provided information about common core curriculum changes, new SBAC assessments, and the introduction of Naviance, a college and career readiness platform for our upper school students. The PTCO also provides refreshments at both school concerts and assists with preparations for marching in the annual Memorial Day parade and field day activities. . All PTCO meetings, events and activities are promoted to the school community via email, flyers, Facebook and word of mouth with a summary of meeting discussions and events reported in each issue of the SBS Monthly newsletter and also on the school website. Although still considered a fledgling group, those who do attend PTCO meetings, come consistently and bring enthusiasm and a strong desire to work to strengthen the group, improve communication and enrich the school experience for everyone. It should be noted that a large number of parents volunteer in the classroom, chaperone and/or drive on field trips, attend school events, and support school fundraisers and as such are active participants in the life of the school and the PTCO, even though they currently do not attend meetings.

Expanded Partnership with New York University Graduate School of Social Work

For the 2013-14 school-year, we had the benefit of having two MSW Interns conducting their field placements at Side by Side, under the supervision of the School Social Worker. They worked directly with students and families providing individual, group, and family counseling, student support groups, and assisting with community service projects and positive youth development activities. One of our interns oversaw a social learning, climate-focused program with the fourth grade. Our other intern conducted a needs-assessment and provided a comprehensive resource list of summer programs and scholarship opportunities in response to the needs of our families for summer child care and enrichment.

Side by Side participation in the Quinnipiac University “Kaleidoscope of Creativity”

The Side by Side art program presented student works of art that have been selected to decorate the offices and walls of the QU School of Education.

Implementation of Advisory Groups

All students in grades 6-8 participated in small advisory group meetings twice a week with a consistent Advisor throughout the year. These groups promoted community cohesiveness and discussions on overall issues related to student academic success, character development, and social justice. The groups followed a monthly thematic curriculum.

Third Successful Year of Implementation of RISE

We successfully implemented our school-wide RISE Program, standing for Respect, Independence, Social Justice, and Empathy. This comprehensive program takes place daily in the classrooms, and visual reminders are set up throughout the school using children's RISE-themed artwork and our RISE logo. Upper School students attend RISE assemblies and are awarded RISE cards to acknowledge their commitment and success in fostering these qualities. Lower School students engage in classroom activities focusing on the principles of RISE. We held monthly All-School RISE Meetings which included parents and family members. Periodically, students across multiple grade levels partake in activities that correspond to their growth in RISE-like qualities as well as their areas of strength and needs, known as RISE Challenge and RISE Assemblies.

Third Successful Year of Implementation of the Back Pack Program

We continued our Back Pack Program in partnership with the Connecticut Food Bank to offer weekend staple food items to children demonstrating food insecurity. We were able to expand the number of children enrolled in the program from 25 to 30 students.

Family Resource Center—Early Room & Extended Day Programs

Over 30 students attended the Extended Day program (available 3:30-5:30pm), while over 50 students were enrolled in the Early Room (7:30-9:00am). A professional artist taught a weekly arts & crafts course, and we offered Karate taught by a certified Black Belt instructor, as well as Yoga taught by a certified Yoga instructor. Other Extended Day activities included: indoor and outdoor sports, story times and related crafts.

Graduate Mentor program

Side By Side is a community that extends beyond current students. In both our extended learning program and our Lego robotics program, former graduates return on a weekly basis to mentor current students as either tutors or robotics mentors. Besides contributing their time and experience to the school community, this level of community service provides exemplary role models for current SBS students.

Student Success Plans

Students' personal success plans continued to develop in the 2013-14 school year. As part of larger secondary education reform efforts, students began setting educational goals, exploring careers and participating in advisories in order to increase student connectedness and help them create a vision for their future. Components of our grades 6-8 program included social emotional well-being, an anti-bullying campaign, health and nutrition, academic goal setting, career, interest and strength surveying and risk taking and resilience building activities.

Readers' and Writers' Café

Introduced in 7th and 8th grade, the purpose or objective was to find another forum to showcase good books and good writing, stimulate conversation and provide another opportunity for kids to learn about other books in the library or glean ideas from pieces of good writing. To recreate an authentic café, tables were covered with tablecloths and food was shared. Students engaged in numerous activities, including sharing a piece of reading or writing, and talking about how many found a book they wanted to read next, or got an idea from a piece of writing for their next writing piece, based on this experience. Besides developing oral language skills in context, this event models Side By Side's commitment to fostering a lifelong love of learning.

Attachments