

U.S. Department of Education
2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Debra Mann

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

Official School Name Griffin Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1700 South Griffin Street

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

City Grand Haven State MI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 49417-2752

County Ottawa County

Telephone (616) 850-5500 Fax (616) 850-5510

Web site/URL https://www.ghaps.org/griffin E-mail mannd@ghaps.org

Twitter Handle _____ Facebook Page _____ Google+ _____

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____ Other Social Media Link _____

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

Date _____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mr. Andrew Ingall E-mail ingalla@ghaps.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Grand Haven Area Public Schools Tel. (616) 850-5000

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

Date _____
(Superintendent's Signature)

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

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

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

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

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be 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.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. 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

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 7 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools

11 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - Suburban
 - Small city or town in a rural area
 - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	22	9	31
K	28	25	53
1	23	29	52
2	25	37	62
3	30	29	59
4	35	25	60
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	163	154	317

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 86 % White
 - 6 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 7%

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	14
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	7
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	21
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	322
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.065
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

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

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Panjabi, Nepali.

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 44 %
Total number students who qualify: 140

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %
42 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- 0 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 15 Mental Retardation
- 2 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 4 Other Health Impaired
- 6 Specific Learning Disability
- 12 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 3 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 12
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	14
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	6
Paraprofessionals	15
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 23:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	97%	96%	96%	98%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes No

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

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

Ensuring equal access to an excellent education in a safe, positive, student-centered environment where students are challenged and empowered to reach their highest potential.

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

PART III – SUMMARY

Griffin Elementary School is a pre-kindergarten through fourth-grade school in the heart of Grand Haven, Michigan. Grand Haven is on the eastern shores of Lake Michigan with a population of nearly 11,000 people and is officially designated Coast Guard City, USA. Tourism and auto parts manufacturing fuel the economy.

Grand Haven Area Public Schools covers nearly 100 square miles serving just over 6,200 students. Griffin Elementary School is a neighborhood school within the city limits and serves approximately 320 students. We are one of seven elementary schools in our district. 44% of our families are economically disadvantaged, qualifying for free and reduced lunches. 17% of our students are special education students receiving services from either our resource room or from our self-contained regional program for cognitively impaired children. Our students with cognitive impairments have significant learning/therapeutic needs and receive coordinated services that include occupational, physical, and speech therapy. Inclusion is part of our culture at Griffin Elementary and our students benefit from learning alongside children with varying abilities.

Our school opened its doors in 1967 as a K – 6 building. We celebrate our 50th anniversary in 2017. Many milestones have helped us build a strong foundation. Recently, the adoption of an everyday, all-day pre-kindergarten and kindergarten program has contributed to our success. This all-day program allows our 5-year-old students the opportunity to have additional time for learning with purposeful play and foundational literacy and math skills.

Our community passed a technology bond in 2014 affording us the opportunity to provide a technology device for every student, significantly leveling the playing field for learning. A culture of possibilities for staff and students was established. In the fall of 2015, PreK-4th-grade students received an iPad. These devices expand learning. Students can access information immediately satisfying curiosity which leads to information-driven projects and promotes collaboration among classmates as we begin to share documents on applications such as SeeSaw. Technology amplifies engagement offering every student a chance to respond to a question using applications like Kahoot. With these tools, teachers can provide meaningful feedback to students and assess student learning immediately. Teachers adjust instruction with higher customization for individual students.

Griffin's history of community and school partnerships is strong. These partnerships contribute to our success by providing additional support to our students. Parent volunteers spend time reading with young readers, mentors build sustained positive connections, local businesses and volunteers donate and fill backpacks with food for the weekend, and parents are engaged in their child's education by attending conferences and after-school learning events. Our PTA raises money to fund academic programs as well as family nights to grow the relationship between families and the school.

Our school pride is evident when you walk in the building. The hallways showcase student successes from talent shows and mileage club to rigorous thinking. The efforts of our village are evident in classrooms, on t-shirts, in the newspaper, and with the confidence in which learners walk down the hall.

With the adoption of more rigorous standards, coupled with the lengthy decline in Michigan's economy, Griffin teachers and staff have persevered and pulled together to weather the significant cuts while continuing to provide an excellent education for our students. Through this time of unprecedented education reform, we have kept our spirits high and our passion for teaching and learning strong. Dedication and commitment to continuous improvement have been our focus as we work and learn together. We are driven to create a positive and safe learning environment that makes Griffin School a place our students want to be. By promoting student thinking, scaffolding strategies, having high expectations, and celebrating growth, Griffin children are succeeding in reaching personal learning goals.

Our core instruction is aligned with rigorous standards. Curriculum is research-based and promotes best practice. Throughout the year, teachers use formative and summative assessment data to drive instruction in

their classrooms. Professional Learning Communities meet to share the responsibility for every child's growth and success.

Teachers also set growth goals for themselves. Throughout the year, educators seek opportunities to grow their practice through professional development, book studies, classroom learning labs, graduate classes and more.

Everyone involved in our learning environment encourages youngsters to gain a solid academic foundation, a love for learning, and strategies they can use to make meaning while developing confidence in themselves to tackle and succeed at any level of education they choose to pursue.

Unique to Griffin is our personal investment in the growth and development of students. With years of continual team-building, the staff has a sense of collaboration, trust, and respect among colleagues which have led to a sense of efficacy to overcome barriers, such as poverty or learning disabilities, and to accelerate learning.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Griffin's curriculum is aligned with Michigan's State Standards. The rigorous standards designate exit outcomes for each grade, preparing students to be college and career ready. The district-selected curriculum is research-based and uses best practice. It is supported with high quality resources to develop a literacy of core subjects. Griffin's reading and math interventionists, instructional coaches, and our principal work with teachers to continuously improve core instruction and to support efforts to reach year-end benchmarks.

ELA

Griffin is intentionally focused on literacy. Our K-12 reading and writing curriculum uses the workshop model to deliver lessons tightly aligned to the state standards. Strongly influenced by The Reading and Writing Project from Columbia University, this curriculum provides ample opportunity for student engagement and teacher feedback. Using a balanced literacy approach, teachers weave thinking routines, interactive read-alouds, guided reading, grammar, and word study into instruction. Curriculum goals in pre-kindergarten through fourth-grade, work to grow readers and writers in a sequential program and teaches students to see themselves as readers and writers.

Students have the power of choice to select books of their interest, as well as write about topics in which they are familiar.

Daily reading extends beyond the classroom and into the homes of our students. Reading is expected for all grade levels with books from our school library and classroom libraries.

Math

A coherent, focused, and rigorous mathematics curriculum is used where students and teachers work to solve real world problems. An inquiry-based curriculum shows students many ways to solve problems mathematically, and invites them to choose the method that makes the most sense. Curriculum is taught in a mastery loop with balanced assessments to provide data to adjust instruction. Students build on knowledge learned previously and continually develop new strategies that deepen their mathematical understanding. As students master computational skills they develop number sense and move into complex mathematical reasoning and problem solving.

Teachers strive for mathematical literacy. Every lesson begins with a discussed learning target, whole group instruction, student exploration using manipulatives, and Math Talk. During Math Talk, student partners explain their thinking on mathematical concepts at various points throughout the lesson.

With the use of flexible grouping, differentiated instruction, and immediate intervention for students who have not mastered basic skills, students are given the supports needed in order to succeed in mathematics. All students receive core instruction. Students needing extra support receive it in a variety of ways, including extended day, intervention blocks, and small group instruction. Teachers design lessons according to the needs of their students by planning within grades and across grade levels. Using ongoing formative assessments, performance tasks, and individual meeting times, students and teachers monitor their learning. By analyzing this data, teachers are aware of their students' understanding. This allows for the design of enrichment or support lessons. Parents are connected to student's learning with homework, parent notes, and math nights.

Science

Our science curriculum provides inquiry-based instruction in the classroom with multiple opportunities for students to engage in the four strands of science (Physical Science, Life Science, Earth Science, and Inquiry and Technology). Classroom instruction includes opportunities for curiosity and exploration. Students

execute investigations, talk and write about their observations, develop understandings, and examine ways to test thinking. A culminating event is presented by fourth-grade students, where they share their knowledge of the scientific method presenting individual science projects to their peers and their parents.

Social Studies

Our social studies curriculum prepares students to become responsible citizens. Classroom instruction includes lessons to help students understand our neighborhoods, city, state, and country. Students learn how places change over time and develop an understanding of different physical and cultural settings. Students are given opportunities to practice responsibilities of citizenship, making informed and reasonable decisions for the common good.

Preschool

Griffin is home to two of the district's preschool programs. The Great Start Readiness Program is a free, state-funded program for families of four-year-olds meeting income/program requirements. The Preschool Development Program is a tuition-based/scholarship program for families with children ages 2 ½ - 5. Both programs use a state-approved, research-based curriculum. It provides intentional instruction using a play-based, developmentally appropriate philosophy. We have documented an increase in kindergarten readiness with our students based on universal screeners.

Across all academic areas, students are engaged in reading and writing experiences. Real-world situations and connections are made in all subject areas to make learning meaningful.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Students in pre-kindergarten through fourth-grade benefit from the following curricular areas throughout the school year: Technology, Spanish, Music, and Arts, meet 50 minutes per week for one semester. Physical Education meets 50 minutes per week all year.

Technology

Curriculum for technology was developed to prepare students to be computer and technology literate. Classes advance from the basic uses of computers, to learning current programs to communicate and gain knowledge. Curriculum changes as student needs change. Lessons intentionally teach touch typing, cyber safety, digital citizenship, and library database usage to support reading. It concludes with a project the students research, create together, and share. It is essential that our students recognize technology as the venue allowing them to be creative, innovative, communicators, and collaborators. Our elementary technology website was created for students, teachers, and parents to have easy access to tools for learning, research, creativity, and student's products.

Spanish

Spanish is taught using as much spoken Spanish in class as possible. The teacher models correct pronunciation of the words and demonstrates proper placement of the tongue/jaw to produce the desired sounds. Music is used to help the students learn basic vocabulary and grammatical topics. Students also use their bodies for total physical response to add muscle memory to their Spanish journey and technology to reinforce what is learned. All of the activities in Spanish help students build a solid foundation of literacy, language, and cultural competency. During class, the teacher helps students analyze Spanish to discover its patterns in order to better understand the language. They are able to learn more about the grammatical structure of English as they use it to better manipulate the Spanish language.

Music

In music class, students learn to appreciate and value music while learning basics and fundamental understandings of how music works. Each weekly lesson features activities that focus on rhythm and

melody in music. These activities engage students kinesthetically with movement around the room. Props such as scarves, giant scrunchies, shakers, and sticks help students are able to internalize and experience the music they are hearing. Songs are taught in a whole-part-whole method. This means students are taught the whole song first, then the teacher breaks the song apart into smaller musical patterns so students are able to see how those patterns fit into a song. Students are given opportunities to use their natural singing voices as a group and individually. Listening to music and understanding musical form is another area of focus.

Arts

Visual arts are taught and include drawing and design, painting, ceramics, mixed media, fibers, and art history. Whenever possible, the art curriculum is integrated with the district's core curricular areas. For example, students engage in art activities that involve symmetry at the same time they are learning about symmetry in math. When working with clay, fourth graders are taught about the physical and chemical changes that occur when clay is fired in the kiln. The connections between arts and math, science and social studies provide many opportunities to teach students problem-solving skills, strengthen their fine motor skills and develop their creativity as they learn to draw, paint, sculpt clay, and learn about famous artists in history. Learning targets are implemented into each lesson. Students use their iPad to create a digital portfolio of their work.

Physical Education

Our physical education program is based on national, state, and district standards, and it is intentionally designed to motivate student learning and achievement. Motor skills are the main focus of our P.E. classes; however, social skill development and the integration of academics are an important part of our focus as well.

Class begins with explaining and demonstrating the learning target. Clear expectations and routines anchor the learning. Throughout the class, students receive specific feedback in order to improve their movement and social skills.

Class concludes with student reflection on their own progress. We celebrate positive sportsmanship and skill development witnessed during class. As students learn new motor and social skills, their confidence level and enthusiasm increase. Classes highlight inclusive behavior and recognize the effort and willingness to try new things.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Our Griffin teachers engage learners with high-level questioning, open-ended problem-solving opportunities, and making learning relevant. Teachers use student engagement activities such as turn-and-talk, think-pair-share, and various visible thinking routines in core curricular areas to achieve meaningful understanding. Careful attention is paid to pacing, lesson design, and integrating 1-to-1 technology throughout the day.

Using gradual release of responsibility, teachers present a learning target and model the goal by teaching a mini-lesson to the whole group. Following the mini-lesson, the students work with the teacher in guided practice of this intentional goal. Students are then released to work on their own, practicing independently.

While students are independently working, the teacher meets with small groups or individuals. Instruction is influenced by research collected during conferring. Teachers and students work to set instructional goals that are appropriate for the varying needs of individual students. Conferencing with students to set personal reading, writing, and math goals allows students and the teacher to celebrate successes as well as move students toward next steps. Teachers use notes from student conferences or evidence from student work to drive instruction for upcoming lessons either with the whole group, small group, or individuals.

We have a tiered approach to instruction that differentiates. Collaboration is a strong component of our program. The success of each student belongs to every teacher. All students receive Tier 1 or core

instruction with rigorous learning scaffolded appropriately. Tier 1 instruction is designed to lead students to year-end benchmarks.

Some students need additional supports to be successful. Approximately 5-15% of students need Tier 2 support by receiving interventions aligned to the skill and intensity of their need. In ELA, students may receive support in phonics, writing, phonemic awareness, comprehension, fluency, and rate of reading. In mathematics, students may receive interventions for place value, computation, problem-solving, and fact fluency.

Approximately 1-5% of students receive Tier 3 support. Students work on skills with greater frequency and intensity, prescribed for each student. Differentiation may include adapting assignments and assessments and working with individuals or small groups.

Examples of our differentiated approach to interventions can be seen in both literacy and math. In addition to reading workshop, students in kindergarten through second grade meet daily in intervention blocks for literacy. Students at benchmark work on enrichment or grade level practice. Students needing support receive targeted intervention. Students in third and fourth grades also receive support in small groups as needed. Special Education and General Education teachers work side by side to meet student needs inclusively and efficiently. A similar intervention block, called the math “huddle” is delivered for third and fourth-grade students.

We live our district’s vision: Success For All. Our staff works hard to make learning meaningful for every individual. We understand the capacity for learning while building on student’s strengths.

4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

Our Professional Learning Community plays a key role in analyzing assessment data and collaboratively making decisions about next steps for growth. This community meets every six weeks and includes teachers, principal, reading specialist, school psychologist and math interventionist. Spreadsheets with triangulated data or progress monitoring data are projected on a wall to make instructional decisions. Intervention groups are shifted and teachers collaborate to meet the changing needs of our students. Sub-group data is analyzed and becomes a priority for service if achievement gaps exist. We believe professional conversations around learning guide us to maintain high levels of achievement.

Balanced assessments are used throughout the year to drive instruction, improve student learning, develop school improvement goals and plan our next steps for growth.

Nationally normed universal screeners in math and reading are given to track progress and to adjust instruction. Teachers use a variety of formative, interim, and summative assessments to gather data and teach essential skills to mastery.

Summative assessments include common unit tests in core subjects. Reading is formally assessed using a diagnostic running record twice yearly and on-demand writing prompts are given after each writing unit. Interim assessments for math occur twice a year online. We also give performance task assessments, asking students to showcase their ability to analyze and synthesize information from various sources and to explain their findings in evidence-based answers. Our mathematics summative and interim assessments were redesigned last year to raise the rigor to align more closely to our state assessment.

Formative assessments are ongoing in classrooms to regularly monitor learning. To help students self-monitor their understanding, teachers begin lessons with a clear learning target that is discussed and posted. At the end of a lesson, students reflect and rate themselves on their learning related to the target with scales. Throughout a lesson, teachers use oral language strategies to check understanding as they engage students in structured partner conversations or whole group sharing opportunities. Questioning techniques with various response systems, exit tickets, quick quizzes, and progress monitoring tools let teachers know if students are ready to move forward.

Teachers conference with students to share progress and work with them to set personal learning goals, helping to create ownership of student learning.

Griffin parents are informed of student achievement, at least, four times per year via parent-teacher conferences and report cards. Regular communication of curriculum and student progress occurs with newsletters and student work sent home. State assessment results and a letter explaining student performance are sent home to communicate with parents.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Our staff's shared beliefs and values create the positive, inclusive culture that pervades our school. We believe school climate and culture have a huge impact on student achievement and behavior. It is essential to provide a safe, supportive learning environment that allows all of us to grow, staff and students, alike.

To create a positive environment for students and staff, we have intentionally implemented structures to promote academic and social-emotional well-being. Each morning students are greeted individually and positively at the door, and our principal shares an uplifting message. To build our learning community, students share good things, affirmations, follow a student-designed social contract for behavior, and are launched with an inspiring message to end their day.

We use a Positive Behavior Intervention System throughout our school that promotes encouragement and positive feedback. Griffin's system uses four pillars: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Safe, Be Positive and our school motto is "Be the Best Me I Can Be". Students are explicitly taught the positive behaviors in each venue of the school. Praiseworthy behaviors are rewarded and celebrated individually, within classrooms, as well as school-wide celebrations.

To nurture social and emotional awareness and skills for learning, we use a research-based program that promotes self-regulation, safety, and support. Some of the skills students learn include attending to instruction, developing empathy, friendships skills, anger management, and problem solving.

A peer support program is implemented to foster relationships and awareness between disabled and nondisabled students. These students are paired and participate in activities to foster relationships. Students know one another beyond first impressions. Every other year, a school-wide disability awareness program is presented to help students experience some of the challenges of their disabled peers.

Griffin has a strong parent support with the Parent Teacher Association that values and supports our school family. A staff social committee organizes monthly staff outings, celebrations, and offers support in times of crises. Our school atmosphere is family and team-oriented with all staff included in the planning and implementation of initiatives that promote student growth. Positive affirmations are common among staff. The respect and trust we have for one another allows for team teaching, cross grade level conversations, and support for one another both professionally and personally. No one stands alone at Griffin.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Families, community groups, and local businesses are an integral part of Griffin Elementary and contribute to our success.

To build a strong connection with our families, we regularly communicate with parents about what children are learning through classroom newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, curriculum nights, and our open house. We also keep up-to-date information about what is happening on our school website and through email. A Title I family reading and math night is held every spring to celebrate the accomplishments of our students who receive reading and math support and to provide additional materials and ideas for summer learning.

We also welcome our parents in as volunteer partners to help with our lower elementary backpack book program, as guest readers, chaperones for educational field trips, members of our school/district improvement teams and to become members of our Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

Our PTA is dedicated to supporting the learning and needs of our school. They provide monthly family fun nights that cost little to no money for our families. They also hold fundraisers to help our school provide field trips, assemblies, and equipment inside and outside of our building.

A number of community groups participate in programs to aid students at Griffin Elementary. A supplementary food program, known as “Backpack Blessings”, discreetly provides families receiving free or reduced lunch with a bag of food for the weekend. Several local businesses and individuals support this program financially.

The Kids Hope Mentor program provides adult mentors from three participating churches who volunteer each week to have lunch with at-risk students while providing academic and emotional support.

Bethany Christian Services is working with school staff to provide an after-school trauma group for parents of children who are fostered, adopted or experiencing significant behavioral problems. This group provides childcare and, a parent support group led by an outside therapist and the School Social Worker, as well as activities for the children.

Our school believes in finding ways to reach out to our community. Each year, our fourth-grade student council selects a philanthropy to support and the students organize activities to raise funds and awareness. As a school tradition, we have a monthly food drive to support local food pantries.

Griffin teachers provide a learning opportunity to many colleges and universities by supervising student teachers and student assistants. We value the growth of upcoming educators and welcome them in our classrooms.

3. Professional Development:

Extensive professional development has been designed to support our newly adopted evaluation tool. Administrators have been trained in this model and are facilitating professional development with teachers on three of the six dimensions this year: Classroom Environment & Culture, Student Engagement, and Professional Collaboration & Communication. By unpacking the teacher evaluation rubrics that contain sub-dimensions and indicators of what teaching looks like, teachers have the ability to understand what distinguished, proficient, basic, and unsatisfactory teaching entails on a learning progression. Teachers select a growth goal they will track and report on mid-year and again at the end of the year. Professional conversations assist teachers to reflect and grow. Most teachers have chosen student engagement as a goal.

To support teachers, our focus for school-wide professional development is centered around student engagement. Staff meetings, some delayed starts, professional book studies, and our Professional Learning Community time are used to study and learn high leverage student engagement practices. During Professional Learning Communities, we grow our practice by implementing new strategies, supporting each other, discussing the results we observe, and reflecting on the impact it has on learning. Collaboration includes sharing information after attending workshops or professional book studies.

With the roll-out of our new one-to-one technology, district professional development has been led by teacher experts to help colleagues use iPads to enhance student engagement, instruction and ultimately student achievement. A variety of summer training sessions were offered and Tech Talks are held before and after school throughout the year to learn more about using the classroom iPads to enhance instruction with applications for feedback, digital portfolios, and engagement.

We use Classroom Learning Lab (CLL) opportunities throughout the school year as job-embedded professional development. Using our own experts grows leadership capacity and creates time for feedback and reflection. These are valuable opportunities because they are safe, non-evaluative and offer reciprocal learning. The CLLs create a shared vision for learning which raises student achievement.

We are fortunate to have two instructional coaches in our building. These trained coaches are available before, after, and during the school day to coach teachers on specific learning goals. These coaches may model, work alongside and facilitate further thinking and exploration regarding instructional strategies. Coaches honor the expertise in the building and facilitate professional conversations and time for reflection and sharing. Our staff appreciates the work of these lead learners.

4. School Leadership:

Griffin School has a shared leadership philosophy which might best be exemplified by our student council. All fourth-grade students are eligible to serve. There are no elections. Leadership opportunities are available to all. No one is turned away. Nearly 50% of the fourth grade chooses to participate in student council to develop leadership skills and foster a sense of community. The student council presents announcements, fundraises for community outreach, and participates in school-wide decision-making. They coordinate a monthly food drive to restock local pantries and lead the district in the amount of items collected to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr on his day. We believe the high participation is a result of their voice and impact in the school, and the school culture that breeds leadership in every staff member. This vision is part of the culture. The entire school body are valuable contributors to the success of our school.

Our principal empowers us to lead and builds our leadership capacity. She provides opportunities for teachers, support staff, students and parents to collaboratively design and act upon decisions with a shared sense of responsibility for our school's continuous improvement.

Griffin representatives serve on all the district committees to be informed and to share our voice. The Multi-Tiered Systems of Support team discusses continuous improvement around research-based tiered interventions. The Climate Committee supports actions to teach, support, and analyze behaviors related to bullying, inclusion, cultural competency, mental health, and relationships. Curriculum committees collectively generate important decisions and share the responsibility for reporting key changes and initiatives at building staff meetings.

The leadership structure of our building is organized into teams: Professional Learning Communities (PLC); Child Study Team (CST); School Improvement Team (SIT); and Behavior Team (BT). These teams include such members as our principal, reading specialist, math interventionist, school social worker and psychologist, resource room teacher, parents, and teachers.

PLCs drive instruction. CST and BT are collaborative groups to reduce barriers to learning for individual students. Griffin synergy happens here. Interventions, accommodations, modifications and behavior plans are discussed and a plan is made to increase student performance. In some cases, a special education referral is implemented.

SIT engages in data analysis. They set goals and plan researched-based strategies and activities to help our school reach academic goals. This team works with all teachers to develop common, school-wide strategies to improve teaching and learning.

Building-level committees offer leadership. Our social committee helps us celebrate successes and enjoy time together outside of the work environment. Our PTA provides family activities and fundraisers that support our school.

Collectively, these leadership teams have a shared investment and claim in the successes of our school.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

What makes Griffin School successful? The value placed on collaboration while embracing all...

When working on this question, we thought it was critical to ask our entire staff to define our one indicator of success. Working collaboratively, working as a team, treating all kids as our own those were the biggest themes that came out of our survey. Staff members feel as though they are supported by each other. No one stands alone. No one can do all that it takes on their own. We come together in times of success and in times of adversity. The culture has been built, it didn't just happen. It was intentionally crafted. Because we are stronger as a team, we are able to continually elevate the teaching and learning of one another.

We have a structure of support to ensure collaboration, which allows us to tap into the expertise and unique talents of individuals. We feel all kids are OUR kids. The Griffin staff is invested in the learning of all students. We work together to meet the needs of each individual both academically and emotionally. Whether it be in PLC, child study, or behavior teams, we determine the next steps in a child's success.

Our vision for continuous improvement is embraced by all. Grade levels collaborate on best strategies and new initiatives. Teachers share the responsibility to improve their craft by continuing their own professional development through book studies, classes, and being a part of Classroom Learning Labs to enhance their practice. We have worked to create a safe platform to share new knowledge with each other to grow as a team.

It is important to our teachers to intentionally share this collaborative spirit in their classrooms. Students are taught how to work together through team building activities. Classrooms learn how to share responsibilities and honor the thinking of one another while engaging in learning under a student-developed social contract.

We are grateful for the support of our school families, parents, volunteers and community organizations who generously respond to our school needs. They are valuable members of our team.

We are proud of what we have built together and often hear from visitors and new staff members how they feel welcomed and surrounded by our positive team spirit which embraces everyone that walks through our doors.

Our legacy of collaboration is like a tapestry of carefully crafted intentions. The threads being our colleagues, students, families, volunteers, and our community.

Together, everyone achieves more is what defines our Griffin TEAM!