

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Dr. Edward Souders

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

Official School Name Great Valley Middle School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 255 North Phoenixville Pike

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

City Malvern State PA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 19355-1124

County Chester County

Telephone (610) 644-6440 Fax (610) 889-1126

Web site/URL http://www.gvsd.org/gvms E-mail esouders@gvsd.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*Dr. Regina Speaker-Palubinsky E-mail rspeakerpalubinsky@gvsd.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Great Valley School District Tel. (610) 889-2100

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. David Barrett
(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):
- 4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 6 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	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	175	171	346
7	166	154	320
8	163	152	315
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	504	477	981

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 18 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 6 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 72 % White
 - 2 % 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: 9%

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	26
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	58
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	84
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	953
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.088
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	9

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

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Bulgarian, Chinese, English, Filipino, French, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Japanese, Kannada, Korean, Malayalam, Marathi, Polish, Spanish, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, and Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 12 %
Total number students who qualify: 119
8. Students receiving special education services: 15 %
145 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.

- 24 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 9 Emotional Disturbance
- 1 Hearing Impairment
- 1 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 35 Other Health Impaired
- 62 Specific Learning Disability
- 13 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 9
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	2
Classroom teachers	39
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	37
Paraprofessionals	28
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	6

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 22:1

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%	97%	97%	97%	96%
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. 1998

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

Ensuring that every student is inspired and prepared to be a passionate lifelong learner and a productive invested participant in the local and global community.

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

Great Valley Middle School (GVMS) is dedicated to an essential mission: to ensure that every student is inspired and prepared to be a passionate lifelong learner and a productive invested participant in the local and global community. Our school community is a student-centered one, focused on the whole child not just in theory, but in practice. We are proud Patriots, on a beautiful campus in Malvern, PA, with a faculty and administration dedicated to the idea that every student has worth. Our school community is becoming increasingly diverse, representing twenty-two languages and a broad range of socio-economic, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. High expectations are a defining attribute of our community, and we welcome parental and community investment in our students' achievements. Our philosophy is influenced in part by the tenets of This We Believe, which outlined the sixteen characteristics of a successful middle school. We have leveraged our previous recognition as a Blue Ribbon School by using it as our standard. We have consistently searched for ways to keep the standard of excellence in place by implementing best practices and reviewing our instructional process, curricular development, and professional development opportunities at our school.

Traditions are at the heart of our school culture and reflective of tremendous student, faculty, and community engagement. For forty years, seventh graders have attended our school's unique outdoor education program at Cape Henlopen State Park in Delaware. This year, the guidance department will host the eleventh annual Heritage Fest. Sixth graders attend visual presentations by classmates, representing the food, attire, culture, and geography of approximately twenty-five countries. For four decades, each December, current and retired faculty members perform a drama production of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol for the students who have recently studied the heartwarming classic. This year will mark our eleventh annual Arts Night, a celebration of students' musical performances, the visual arts, poetry, and a culinary demonstration, attended by over one thousand community members. In June eighth graders will travel on an overnight field trip to Washington D.C.'s historical sites and museums. In recent years, a new tradition has developed for sixth and seventh graders. They begin each school year participating in a Ropes Course program designed to promote teamwork, cooperation, and self-esteem through structured problem solving activities and experiential learning. This focus on community building is foundational, structuring every program and revealed even in our smaller and newer traditions.

Another characteristic of our exemplary school culture are the supports we offer for students to develop academically, socially, emotionally, and culturally. Teachers come in before the school day and stay afterwards to help students with academic work. Our staff is present outside the classrooms: at games, dances, club trips, and community events. Our student assistance team meets weekly to discuss interventions for at-risk students, and faculty members mentor individual students and share school policies and resources for those students in need of support. Technology is a daily part of our students' instructional day. The school has implemented a "Bring Your Own Technology" (BYOT) program that allows students to use their own technology to enhance the learning experience at school, and our guidance department provides computers to economically disadvantaged students.

Our positive climate is evident because the majority of our students participate in our school's athletic programs, academic and service clubs, and performing arts groups. The daily announcements, broadcast from our student run television studio, celebrate our students' achievements in these areas, including victories on the field and gym, but also the fundraising totals for the Wounded Warrior Project or the number of jeans collected for homeless youth, entertaining video clips from our fall musical, and student council commercials for our Chili Cook-Off. Builders Club, Student Council, and the National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) implement service activities throughout the school year that would not be possible without the empathic participation of our student body and faculty. These include students singing for nursing home residents, hosting a Bingo Night for adults with special needs, raising money for charities like the American Cancer Society, and conducting clothing and food drives for local pantries and shelters.

Much of the support for students is provided through their peers, allowing unique opportunities for student leadership and increasing students' connections with each other. NJHS members tutor their classmates. 8th grade student leaders help sixth graders transition to the middle school through an orientation program called W.E.B, "Where Everyone Belongs." Since its inception ten years ago, this program has included a day prior to the start of school for sixth graders to meet each other, counselors, and student mentors, and to get acclimated to the building. Over eighty student mentors visit students' advocacy rooms to answer questions and help sixth graders in the hallways with schedules and lockers once school begins.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Our school's core subjects of social studies, mathematics, science, and English/Language Arts (ELA) were developed in accordance with the Pennsylvania State Core Standards (PACS).

Social studies education in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade encourages students to improve their communication and research skills, and make connections to the real world. This curriculum offers many opportunities to develop students' critical reading skills and academic writing, especially on summative assessments. The sixth grade curriculum's main focus of study is the Ancient World. Students also learn how the five fundamental themes of Geography answer essential questions about how the themes affect the way people live. The seventh grade social studies curriculum is designed as a survey course introducing students to the seven social sciences of history, political science, economics, geography, psychology, sociology, and anthropology. United States history from the colonies in 1607 to its emergence as a world power in 1920 is the focus of the eighth grade social studies curriculum.

Decisions on how to implement the PACS for mathematics were made at the local level; therefore, Great Valley wrote a curriculum that adapted the Singapore Math program to fit the needs of our students and promote advanced critical thinking by asking students to apply mathematical concepts and skills to real-world situations through mathematical reasoning. Our curriculum standards are designed to increase college and career readiness to an internationally competitive level. Ratios, proportional reasoning, and algebraic thinking are the targeted areas of the math curriculum. Rather than teaching topics in isolation, these concepts are covered at a rigorous level, requiring students to make mathematical connections across units and even grade levels. Foundational skills are acquired through a strong focus on conceptual understanding, procedures, fluency, and application. The use of manipulatives and model drawing has become part of our math culture. This in-depth understanding allows students to make the connections required to apply math reasoning to rigorous and novel challenges.

All three grade levels of science instruction cultivate students' scientific understanding using a hands-on, inquiry based approach. There is an emphasis on the analysis and synthesis of scientific observations and data. These results are communicated through technical writing. Because science classes are heterogeneously grouped, teachers use a variety of collaborative learning activities and differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all science learners. The sixth grade science curriculum develops a variety of scientific processing skills while exploring such topics as chemistry, physics, and the environment. In seventh grade, basic principles of biology are taught including cell, life processes, heredity, classification, and ecology. The eighth grade science course is a survey of Earth and space sciences. Astronomy, meteorology, geology, and natural resources are topics explored through lab experiences, the use of models, and the daily use of technology.

Sixth grade ELA classes benefit from a double period of instruction; one period is devoted to reading instruction and a second period focuses on writing. All seventh and eighth grade ELA classes occur in a single period of instruction. Reading instruction is anchored in meaningful reading opportunities that examine quality literature that address contemporary and engaging issues. These reading experiences span a wide range of genres and reflect conventional as well as digital forms of communication. Discussions, group activities, and written responses form the basis for gauging students' comprehension. Direct instruction of vocabulary skills and word study enable students to encounter increasingly complex texts. Additionally, one period per week is devoted to personal choice reading in a Reading Workshop format to promote a love of reading. Students receive explicit instruction in the writing process. During the year students produce compositions for a variety of purposes and audiences. Grade level, district, and state writing rubrics provide a consistent evaluation of each student's growth as a writer. Grammar instruction includes explicit instruction and lessons embedded in the writing process. This moves students towards independence as editors of their written work.

Within all grades across the core subject areas, there are opportunities for students to develop speaking, listening, writing, reading, and research skills and to practice the application of technology. These skills are an integral part of communication in the modern world that our students will be well-equipped to utilize.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

All students have two periods a day devoted to special area education. Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS), art, music, and technology education are experienced in a 45 day rotation, while computer applications, physical education (PE), and health classes are taken two days a cycle all year long. Each class addresses PA state standards.

During the FACS rotation, students learn real world skills like financial and resource management, food science and nutrition, child development, and being a wise consumer. Students explore health risks associated with eating disorders, as well as how to prepare nutritious meals. The hand and machine sewing units appeal to our tactile and kinesthetic learners. FACS allows children to develop knowledge and skills to make responsible personal, family, and work choices as adults.

In addition to designing individual fitness plans in health class, students learn about nutrition, drugs, tobacco, and sex education. A highlight for students is when the Positive I.D. Club from the high school visits our health classes and teaches about positive personal power during the drug, alcohol, and tobacco unit.

PE focuses on lifetime fitness and traditional team sports. Students are socially and emotionally challenged through team building and challenge by choice activities. For example, our eighth grade PE classes create and administer new fitness assessments that measure one of the eleven fitness components.

The visual arts curriculum uses the Geddy Model of Disciplined Based Art Education. Students engage in art production, aesthetics of art, art history, and philosophy of art in a blended format. Higher level questioning is stressed in each unit. Written responses to art are captured in student journals.

The music curriculum incorporates all facets of music: singing, playing, performing, creating, creative play, improvisation, music history, cultural music, music theory, and music technology. These skills include musicianship and performance etiquette, critical listening, composition and production, and appreciation of the historical and cultural perspective of music in regards to styles, genres, and social significances. In the most recent curriculum revision, the music department added a focus on technology. Sixth graders study music form, seventh graders compose music, and eighth graders analyze music in film.

The technology education curriculum develops a variety of science, technology, engineering, and math concepts through problem-based learning. The focus in sixth grade is on renewable energy and natural resources which culminates in the making of a solar car. In addition to learning about the fundamentals of GPS, seventh graders develop technical drawing skills to build and launch a rocket. By eighth grade, the foundation is set to explore structural and electrical engineering, Computer Aided Drafting, and 3D printing and modeling.

Computer applications' goal is to prepare students with computing skills and knowledge of technology. Sixth grade students concentrate on keyboarding and begin instruction with Microsoft Office programs, so by seventh grade they are able to make interactive presentations and manipulate spreadsheets. In eighth grade, students learn the basics of a database, make animations, and create movies using a video editing software. Much of the classwork directly employ concepts learned in other classrooms while simultaneously supporting lessons and projects in core content areas.

Seventh grade students have the unique opportunity to select two languages to explore for 90 days. In French, German, Latin, or Spanish, the two main goals are to build basic conversational skills and broaden students' appreciation and understanding of world cultures. In eighth grade, students pick one language to take as an elective; this class meets daily. Each language option offers distinct experiences that appeal to all learners. For example, eighth grade students participate in a pen pal exchange with a French middle school.

This exchange has been going on for several years now and has resulted in long-lasting friendships. A 22 year old former student shared that on a recent trip to Europe, she met her pen pal from this very exchange that began for her in eighth grade.

For assignments requiring research in any subject area, the librarian teaches students about subscription databases and effective and efficient search strategies that students can employ throughout their academic career. The library's large collection of nonfiction and fiction resources, as well as electronic resources, provides strong support to curricular areas, especially in the area of ELA and reading.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Our school sets high expectations for our students by encouraging all children to continually acquire and apply new skills and knowledge. We expect each student to achieve the academic standards of the program in which he/she is enrolled. At times, students need extra support to accomplish these expectations. Our school's variety of instructional methods and interventions help four different student populations: struggling readers, Mentally Gifted students, English Language Learners (ELL), and Learning Support (LS) students.

GVMS recognizes that struggling readers are in need of support, so the staff reviews assessment data when creating class lists for our two remedial reading courses. Strategic Reading is a class that strengthens comprehension skills and promotes strategy acquisition to tackle fiction and non-fiction texts. Critical Reading continues to foster independent critical thinkers who can interpret a variety of texts. Both courses provide formal reading instruction by a certified reading specialist.

GVMS acknowledges that gifted students exhibit strengths in problem solving and/or critical thinking skills that require specialized instruction. Our gifted students attend daily seminars and extension periods that address varied interests such as Philosophy, Shakespearean drama, creative writing, coding in the arts, and architecture. Many of these opportunities include technology, field trips, and guest speakers. These seminars and enrichment periods are in addition to the differentiation gifted students receive in the regular education setting.

Our ELL program is unique because we have classes for our Entering, Beginning, and early Developing level students which integrate English language instruction with ELA and social studies. Taught by a certified English as a Second Language (ESL) Program Specialist, these classes provide a sheltered environment to read, write, listen to, and speak academic English while also making personal connections with the curriculum. All ESL instruction is in a small class environment, allowing these students to safely take risks with their language acquisition.

The LS program focuses on students who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Our school offers direct instruction academic classes, along with specialized programs such as Wilson and Just Words. Students who need remediation in the regular education classrooms are offered reading, writing, and math labs. All students are provided with a Guided Study class to focus on organization, study skills, and homework completion. Recently, our administrators and teachers identified a new population of students who need support due to executive functioning difficulties; therefore, GVMS implemented an Executive Functioning program in 2014.

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

GVMS prides itself on the variety of assessment tools used to track student achievement and inform teacher instruction. Formative and summative assessments are the two main categories of measuring instruction and learning. Teachers adjust for the needs of students by using formative assessments in daily instruction. In addition to homework and quizzes, formative assessments include exit tickets, journal reflections, and student-teacher conferences. These formative assessments help teachers determine how and when their instruction needs to be adjusted, and which students may be in need of enrichment or remediation.

Students' cumulative knowledge is evaluated through summative assessments. All teachers use common summative assessments to measure the application of skills, mastery towards standards, and student growth. Summative assessments take many forms at GVMS; project-based assessments, oral presentations, essays, and tests are prevalent in our classrooms. Also, some instructors, like those teaching 8th grade science, have developed and regularly use computer-based assessments in an online learning management system.

In addition to teacher-created summative and formative assessments, GVMS utilizes two other diagnostic measures to inform instruction: the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test and the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). MAP, a nationally normed computer assessment in reading and mathematics, is given to all students three times a year. This test gives teachers and administrators more in-depth data on individual students' progress with specific reading and math strands. This information, along with PSSA data, is analyzed by both grade level and content teams in order to provide interventions for students in need of support, and enrichment for students who have shown mastery in specific strands. This also allows for teachers to find data trends within a whole class that might justify an adjustment in instruction, as well as aids our administrators in determining the degree to which our programs enable students to make substantial academic progress.

Great Valley works hard to ensure that our assessment results are shared with a variety of stakeholders. Through Skyward, our online student information system, parents and students have instant access to all grades as well as MAP and PSSA scores. During parent-teacher conferences, teachers help parents interpret this student data and discuss ways in which the needs of that student can be met both at home and at school. Additionally, our school board receives regular updates about student growth via MAP test data, and our PSSA scores are reported in local newspapers, so tax-payers are kept informed.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Social and emotional education is paramount to GVMS's culture. The faculty strives to form a genuine relationship with each student which has a tremendous and lasting impact. Our students might not remember the details of our lessons, but they will remember the way we made them feel in our classrooms.

While a lot of relationships between staff and students develop in classrooms and on sports fields, students form bonds with teachers and peers through Patriot Pride (PP), our bi-monthly advocacy program. The goal of PP is to create a safe environment to promote students' academic, social, and behavioral success. Teacher-facilitated groups engage in activities around themes like stress-management, cyber-bullying, communication, and diversity. Because Patriot Pride provides communities within our larger school community, our positive school culture is more evident than ever before.

The culture among staff members is reassuring and collegial. The faculty makes an effort to know each other personally; this is the foundation for our strong collaborative spirit among and within departments. There is "positive peer pressure" among the faculty to evaluate our teaching and improve professionally. This culture of mentorship was set by former teachers. Every staff member in GVMS can name a retired colleague who was influential in forming her into the educator she is today.

Retired teachers have a hard time "staying away" from the strong school climate they helped to build. Former teachers happily return to substitute, run the TV studio, moderate the Geography Bee, and chaperone ski trips. One of the most lasting impacts of retirees on our school's culture is their continued participation in the seventh grade field trip to Cape Henlopen State Park. Conceived four decades ago by two, now retired, teachers, the outdoor education program is the longest tradition in GVMS. Countless retirees return to Henlopen every year to chaperone the week-long trip run exclusively by GVMS faculty. Henlopen is the optimum environment to educate the whole child. It provides dynamic learning experiences, promotes student leadership, and improves student attitudes towards education. Through team-oriented, cross-curricular activities prior to camp, students realize the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge. Once on the Atlantic coastline, teachers construct an atmosphere where classroom skills can be applied to actual learning situations outside the formal classroom. Because the trip invites cooperative interaction between the students and teachers, the effects contribute to our culture and stays with students throughout their middle school experience.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

At GVMS, the education of our students is a collaborative effort, and we pride ourselves in our work to engage the community with our learners. Essential to our collaboration is communication. Our MS Matters newsletter allows parents to know what is going on from week to week. Teachers communicate about students' progress through our on-line grading book, e-mails, phone calls, and an open invitation for a conference at any time during the school year.

Parent volunteers are actively engaged in our school. They can be found in the library daily helping in a variety of ways. Parents are guest speakers for career presentations, organized by our guidance department, and are also essential to the production of our school musical. Our school also utilizes volunteers as Key Communicators. This group's goal is to increase two-way communication between district office, the schools, and the parent community. Our PTO keeps families informed about district and school programs, and communicates parental input regarding policy, curriculum, programs and activities to school administrators

The Foundation at Great Valley garners community support and engagement for our school district and provides supplemental revenue through private philanthropy. The Foundation at Great Valley is organized and governed by a dedicated group of volunteer community and business leaders, retired corporate executives and educators. The Foundation has been extremely supportive and integral to student success at

our school. For example, the Foundation supported the iCompose curricular initiative that has been developed over the last three years. They helped provide the music technology grant needed to implement this innovative music technology component to the music curriculum. Additionally, the Foundation provided a grant to facilitate the creation of a Robotics program- where student teams design, build, and program robots to compete interscholastically in competitions.

With community support, the music department has been able to provide our students with the opportunity to showcase their talents in a wide variety of performances above and beyond traditional school concerts. In the 2015-2016 school year our students sang the national anthem at Lincoln Financial Field, performed at community events like Malvern Victorian Christmas and Memorial Day parade, and participated in community and state competitions.

Finally, we are pleased to have strong ties with community organizations like Home of the Sparrow, Safe Harbor, the Food Pantry at Covenant Presbyterian Church, Pocopson Nursing Home, and Peoples Light and Theater Company.

3. Professional Development:

While guided by our strategic plan and building goals, the purpose of Great Valley School District's (GVSD) professional development is to ensure the consistent implementation of high quality standards-aligned curricula, improve effective instructional practices, advance our ability to identify students who are academically at risk, and develop and monitor the use of interventions based upon student needs.

With the recent adoption of the PA Core standards, GVSD has focused its professional development on the continued improvement of both our curricula and instructional practices. Teacher training, led by expert consultants, focuses on rethinking how our teachers instruct, facilitate, and assess our students. The district provides opportunities for teachers to attend conferences, take classes, research educational technology, and collaborate in order to better meet the needs of our students, as well as advance our programs into the future.

In ELA, faculty members have been engaged in curriculum writing and revision, with an emphasis on differentiated instruction and a shift toward teaching skills, rather than texts. The Math department has focused on an adaptation of the Singapore Math program, specifically the use of manipulatives and drawing bar models to help student represent concepts concretely and with pictures. They have also focused on the development of math exercises that require students to make cross-unit connections in application.

Each year, our faculty also participates in a professional growth contract using specialized resources focused on specific district goal areas. While working independently or with colleagues, teachers have the opportunity to read, study, discuss, and then integrate new learning into their instructional practices. Ultimately the goal of this contract is to increase student academic growth, and teachers provide evidence of this work such as data that was used to inform instruction, examples of student work, and strategies and resources that were employed to meet the needs of all learners.

Another component of professional development is the formation of Student Learning Objectives or SLOs. These content-specific, grade level learning objectives provide evidence of teacher's instructional impact on student learning through the analysis of data. In-service days primarily provide colleagues in each content area the opportunity for additional time to work together on curriculum, assessment and instruction. A consistent theme of this work has been increasing academic rigor. For example, our teachers have been trying to improve assessments such that students are more often asked to analyze, synthesize, reason, and apply in order to show content mastery.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy of our building principals is focused on a simple goal: to serve those who serve our students. One way that administrative leadership has impacted our school success is that they empower the faculty to be instructional leaders, acting with a collective focus on the development of the whole child.

Teachers are the catalysts for new initiatives, certain that the administrative team recognizes their professional expertise and supports innovative pedagogical risks that will directly benefit our students.

When lean economic times had the potential to impact student success, our administration fought to maintain programs, allocate resources, and preserve traditions. For example, when neighboring districts were removing electives from the middle school experience, our principals ensured that students would still receive this instruction daily. Additionally, the administrative vision focuses on reaching the 21st century learner through new technology. For instance, in addition to our school's labs, every classroom was provided a mini-pad. Some classrooms have the added advantage of receiving laptop carts

Faculty leaders who demonstrate exemplary pedagogy are acknowledged and encouraged by administration to participate in professional opportunities. For example, members of our science department have presented at various state and national conferences, including a presentation entitled, "Teaching the 21st Century Learner through Collaboration, Technology, and Inquiry." Our entire school community benefits from an administrative approach that is focused on removing impediments to student progress and providing support for classroom leaders.

Another component of school leadership is an environment of open communication. Our principals function as a team with a consistent message. Decisions are not made in isolation; there are frequent opportunities for collaboration within the school day. For example, grade level teams have meetings with our administration team weekly. This communication is essential because it provides an opportunity for all the teachers to participate in a dialogue with the principals in a timely forum. Topics are generated by both administration and teachers and can range from information about a new technology initiative to field trip coordination. This partnership has resulted in decisions about scheduling, grading practices, and discipline interventions. Another priority of administration is a concerted and ongoing appraisal of the "state of our school", including the celebration of faculty achievements and student progress. It is evident that school leadership impacts our students' academic growth and achievement.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

A single practice that has been influential in GVMS's success is common team and planning time. Our school structure utilizes a team approach, wherein a grade level is divided into three teams, each with a set of core content teachers. These teachers have time every day to collaborate both within the team and with their content partners. Through dialogue with colleagues in neighboring school districts, we have come to realize how rare and important this component of our schedule is because it allows time for both team and content-area collaboration.

We have scheduled team collaboration multiple times a cycle. These meetings include conferencing with our school guidance counselor and social worker about students' personal and academic needs which directly impacts student success. Teachers discuss common interventions for at-risk students. We also confer about schedule changes to accommodate special lessons, guest speakers, and team activities. Additionally, we use this common time to review PSSA and MAP data, with ELA and Math teachers directly explaining general trends, identifying students who are in need of additional support, and recommending specific ways to address areas of weakness in all disciplines.

Additionally, with the opportunity for content meetings built into our schedule, curriculum and assessments are discussed at every meeting with members of the team. Opportunities for remediation and enrichment are generated; common formative and summative assessments are designed. Pacing is calibrated. New resources are shared, and discussions around common grading expectations occur. For example, ELA teachers can be found scoring samples of student writing using a common rubric in order to align grading practice. 8th grade science teachers develop assessments modified specifically for E.L.L learners during their content period. L.S. teachers plan co-taught lessons with regular education teachers. This collaboration is essential to support our L.S. students' connection to the regular education curriculum. Meeting notes are compiled through digital tools like Microsoft One Note, which gives colleagues and administrators the ability to participate in the conversation through access to these agendas. It is common team and planning time that allows smaller "grass roots" professional learning communities to take place, and this fosters the positive culture of GVMS.