

U.S. Department of Education
2020 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. Brenda L. Greene Ed.D
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Northeast School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 69 East Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Vernon State CT Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 06066-3837

County CT

Telephone (860) 870-6080 Fax (860) 870-6095

Web site/URL
https://www.vernonpublicschools.org/northeast-school E-mail brenda.greene@vernonct.org

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.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Joseph Macary Ed.D E-mail jmacary@vernon-ct.gov
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Vernon School District Tel. (860) 870-6000

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.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mrs. Anne Fischer
(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.

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

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. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2020 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2014 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
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 (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
 Suburban
 Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	16	17	33
1	17	16	33
2	18	16	34
3	15	14	29
4	17	24	41
5	24	20	44
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	107	107	214

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 7 % Asian
 - 12 % Black or African American
 - 18 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 53 % White
 - 10 % 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 2018 - 2019 school year: ≤1%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

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, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	0
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	0
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	0
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<1

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 100 %

Total number students who qualify: 214

8. Students receiving special education services: 17 %

36 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.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>2</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>13</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>1</u> Developmental Delay | <u>15</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>4</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 8

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	12
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	9
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 18:1

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

Required Information	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	95%	96%	92%	94%	94%
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 2019.

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. 1991

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

The Northeast Elementary School community – embracing students, teachers, staff, and families – is passionately committed to continuous improvement and excellence. Northeast students feel safe, supported, and a sense of affiliation and family, at a high-performing school where everyone learns how to do be their best.

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

Northeast Elementary School (NES) is an 100% free lunch/breakfast school, with 214 students. The Northeast student population consists of 53% Caucasian, 18% Hispanic/Latino, 11% Black/African American, 7% Asian and 11% with multiple ethnicities. We have 17% of students who are serviced through IDEA, and 5% serviced through a 504 plan.

While NES opened initially in 1954, the most recent part of our journey began in 2011, at which point the school's performance had declined to a Connecticut State percentile ranking of only 22% for aggregated academic test scores among all State elementary schools. During the eight years since then, Northeast School academic performance has grown steadily, tripling to a 67% percentile ranking in 2019.

For both the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years, Northeast School achieved Connecticut Category 1 school status. Only 91 (9%) Connecticut public schools out of a total of 968, including all grade levels and income and demographic characteristics, were ranked as Category 1 schools for their extraordinary performance across a comprehensive range of 12 indicators. Northeast also received a School of Distinction Status for High Performance for All students, and High Growth for All Students, for the most recent 2018-19 school year.

Northeast School begins each year by bringing our community together with several family events hosted directly by the school or by our PTO. We start the year with a family "Meet and Greet", when students come to Northeast to meet their teacher for the new year. During this time, we have a scavenger hunt in the form of a mystery puzzle or game, with the objective of getting students and parents to meet all staff and visit the entire school.

Another one of our favorite community events is the VIP Breakfast hosted by school staff hosts, for students and parents. We offer coffee and doughnuts, and it is a special time when staff, student and parents can mingle. This year staff created a Kindness Game for the VIP event. Students needed to say, "Good Morning" to a staff member, introduce their respective parents/guardians to someone new, and there were other tasks to complete on the Kindness Game Card.

All of our school events include a family activity to engage parents with their children, and there is always a drawing for a prize at the end of the event. We end each year the same way we start. We bring the community together for a family picnic, where families get together to play games, mingle with staff and friends – and eat, of course!

Relative to academic instruction, our curricula have been updated to the Connecticut State Standards, with embedded performance tasks in all subject areas. Through each curriculum, students are taught with creative lessons, and are assessed by performance videos, PowerPoint presentations, group and individual assessments, and computerized assessments. This assessment portfolio captures multiple the learning styles and learning needs of our students.

We implement the "Second Step" program to help address the social and emotional needs of students. We also incorporate "Choose Love", a social and emotional learning program created after the Sandy Hook tragedy in Connecticut. Both standout programs offer student strategies that promote self-awareness and self-regulation.

Northeast School was recognized as a Blue-Ribbon School in 1991, and it is honor to be recognized by the State of Connecticut as a Blue-Ribbon school for the most recent school year, nearly 30 years later. In a world where it is easy to be distracted by the needs of adults, the unrelenting focus at Northeast is on the needs of our students. Northeast is a special place where we work together to teach students, not subjects. We embrace our families and community as partners in educating our students, because we understand that relationships matter. Everyone in the Northeast Elementary School community looks forward each new year to learn, grow, and build enthusiastically on our success.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

The goal of the Northeast School curriculum is to develop independent and lifelong critical thinkers, readers, and writers who possess a love of learning, and who are prepared to thrive in an ever-changing global society. Students will acquire, use, and synthesize information, and solve problems both independently and collaboratively. They will communicate effectively, using multiple formats for varied audiences and different purposes. Upon graduation, our students will be equipped and empowered with the attitudes, skills, and literacy tools they need to navigate through life with enhanced purpose and meaning.

Implementation of the curriculum includes a classroom climate where risk-taking and student-directed learning are encouraged, in order for responsible decision-making and problem-solving behaviors to be developed. This climate leads to a high level of student engagement within a strong community of learners and provides purpose and relevance for student learning.

Incorporated throughout our curricula are real world and purposeful cornerstone performance tasks that synthesize multiple standards, and which are consistently administered to anchor instruction and assess learning. The curriculum document encompasses new and evolving formats that use technology to access and apply information. Instructional materials are varied and include authentic literature from numerous text sources such as podcasts, digitized images, print, and video, which encourage students to apply literacy skills across disciplines.

To complement our curricula, we have transformed our library to incorporate more than books. We have created “Makerspace” to help prepare those who need critical 21st century skills in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Our library now provides not only books and magazines for check out, but also provides hands-on learning tools to help with critical thinking skills and boost self-confidence.

For instance, our "Makerspace" library has a large Lego table, and an area where students can display their Lego creations. Board games, card games and unique puzzling activities are available to students. The library is made available to students at any time (especially when recess is indoors), and students learn social skills and problems solving skills, while playing and interacting with each other naturally.

1b. Reading/English language arts

Throughout the curriculum, we apply the reading and writing workshop model. The workshop model incorporates 1) a mini lesson (explicit instruction of a skill or strategy through various means, and active engagement where students work together to practice the skill/strategy before independent reading), 2) independent practice including reading conferences, and 3) a wrap-up share.

Other components of the literacy block include an interactive read-aloud with accountable talk (either through turn-and-talk or class conversations), shared reading (all eyes on the same text with students joining in choral reading and skill practice), and phonological/phonemic awareness work. During both read aloud and shared reading components, emphasis is placed on close reading (re-reading and digging deeper into the details of the text and illustrations). Strategy groups and/or guided reading groups are incorporated into the classroom once routines are established.

In grades 3-5, we continue to use the reading and writing workshop model; and during the interactive read aloud, we emphasize close reading (i.e. re-reading at a deeper level the details of the text and illustrations), followed up with either oral or written responses. Strategy groups and/or guided reading groups are incorporated into the classroom routine and created based on individual conferencing and assessments (e.g. exit slips, IXL program, performance tasks, I-Ready, F&P, etc.).

Throughout each unit, students strengthen their foundational skills by reading poetry and prose with not only purpose and understanding, but with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression. They improve throughout the year by acquiring the skills and strategies to self-correct and re-read when necessary.

Our ELA instruction is organized into six units with explicit information provided within curricular documents. Within each unit, there is a list of suggested texts and teacher resources to support instruction.

Many foundational reading standards are taught concurrently with the units, using the Foundations (Wilson) Program. Writing standards and language are also taught concurrently using the Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing (L. Calkins), and the Fundamentals of Grammar and Conventions (Schoolwide) program. In the upper grades 3-5, we apply Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing (L. Calkins), Common Core aligned mystery and poetry units, and the Fundamentals of Grammar and Conventions (Schoolwide), and Words Their Way (Grade 3-5) programs.

Students in grades 3-5 are exposed to debating and write persuasive essays. We select topics of student interest such as banning chocolate milk, discontinuing access to Anime books, or implementing a school uniform policy, etc. We select high interest topics based on the particular group of students. By knowing our students, we can choose and deliver subjects that engage the students' true capabilities.

1c. Mathematics

Eureka Math is the primary resource that Vernon Public Schools uses to support the math curriculum. Our philosophy is not to have a worksheet-driven curriculum. Rather, Northeast teachers create units to promote a student-centered learning environment. We teach both the math content standards of Common Core, and the Standards of Math Practice as well. Frequent opportunities for students to instill these mathematical practices into their classroom activities gives students the tools to persevere and succeed not only through math, but through any problem they encounter in life.

Each section of the curriculum document plays an important role in implementing the curriculum. Each unit begins with a rationale as to why we teach this, what is being taught, and what may have changed from past practice. Also included are teacher and student misconceptions, that help teachers take a more thoughtful approach to their planning. Using Know Understand Do (K.U.D.) lesson format assists teachers in fully explain what students need to know, understand, and be able to do. The learning plan provides a selection of effective lessons that help students learn each skill/concept in each standard.

At Northeast School, we apply a balanced approach in our math workshop model that integrates explicit instruction of skills/strategies, independent practice with opportunities for student choice, and small-group mathematics instruction tailored to individual student needs. All instruction is differentiated, meeting the needs of students at their current level of performance, and advancing them with scaffolding and various learning modalities.

At Northeast, we use iReady online lessons and the IXL program as additional resources. We have strategy groups focused on specific needed skills and strategies, and we teach students to communicate mathematical understanding through reading, writing and discussion using accountable talk and the language of mathematics. We increase student understanding of math by having students write about their mathematical thinking, and the reasoning behind their answers.

We teach students using the Connecticut Mathematics standards explicitly and within the context of authentic learning in order to build conceptual understanding. Students have daily opportunities to talk about their mathematical learning in both large and small groups, which promotes deepened understandings and capitalizes on the power of peers. We use real world, purposeful performance tasks that synthesize multiple standards, and which are consistently administered to anchor instruction and assess both conceptual understanding and fluency in skill application. One of Northeast's strengths is creating real-world (grade level) scenarios for students to solve. We include student topics such as gaming, sports, and food to "hook" students into the lesson.

Our pacing guides are organized by weeks. Teachers receive a yearly pacing guide from the Vernon district, detailing specific dates for completing each unit for district-wide assessment purposes. Some units are longer than others and require a more in-depth investigation of concepts, corresponding to “Major Areas of Focus” identified for the grade level.

Quick assessments are embedded into and inform instruction. They include individualized, specific and timely feedback to promote student growth.

1d. Science

At Northeast School, we believe that children are born investigators. They naturally study, think, and build internal models of the world around them, whether they know it or not. Science is an extension of this natural curiosity to investigate the material world and develop a body of knowledge and practices. At Northeast, we believe that science education is not just a process of acquiring a body of static knowledge. It also includes developing the ability to use everyday tools, ranging from flashlights and rulers to computers and Legos; and the ability to build and explain models, make predictions, and conduct scientific inquiry.

The Vernon District’s Elementary Science Curriculum is consistent with, and in full support of, the Connecticut State Science Curriculum and the Next Generation Science Standards. The curriculum incorporates the intellectual rigor of scientific inquiry, as well as the attitudes and social values conducive to preparing a scientific literacy for the 21st century. Our teachers employ a student-centered science approach to learning that engages students physically and mentally in inquiry-based science and engineering programs. Teachers promote and value student thinking, curiosity, and questioning. Students learn personal skills that they use to express and share points-of-view, solve problems, and make decisions.

Whether involved in science investigations or the Engineering Design Process, Northeast students engage in manipulating materials and making observations, solving problems, and explaining their ideas and answers based on evidence. Throughout every unit, students reflect regularly on what they have done, the problems they have encountered, and how they developed solutions.

Just as reading, writing, and mathematics involve the performance of complex practices, so does our science. One example each year is the much-anticipated oversight of duckling hatchings by our fifth graders. Over a period of weeks, our students discover the process of incubating and handling duck eggs.

1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

At Northeast School, we challenge our students to go beyond the content, to be critical and creative thinkers, reflective learners, information gatherers, and problem solvers. The Vernon Public Schools Social Studies Curriculum incorporates a wide range of teaching methods in which students must address an issue, and to clearly articulate their points of view. This is done through writing, discussion, debate, formal presentation and creative projects. We hope our students eventually graduate as socially aware, democratic participants who draw on the lessons of social studies throughout their lives.

Our teachers are supported through collaborative partnerships with families and the community, partnering with museums and cultural organizations in town. Field trips to the Civil War Museum, Colonial Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts, Village Vernon Town Hall, Vernon’s Belding Wildlife Preserve, and a trip to Boston, give our students local, hands-on experiences. Indeed, many of our students would not otherwise visit such places. We strive to engage students in the world around them – to make them hungry to learn about life outside Vernon and Connecticut.

We believe effective social studies instruction requires teachers to apply strong historical content knowledge to local, national, and global contemporary challenges. We strive to make our social studies instruction be meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and active. Our teachers encourage and facilitate a student-centered environment, driven by deep student inquiry. As students “react to the past” and “interact with their historical peers”, we want them to leave a given class seeking answers to more compelling questions.

We do this by inviting storytellers to our classrooms. We have students choose an historical person to research and represent that person in a wax museum format. We focus on active engagement where the classroom comes to life, as students grapple with messy problems, weigh the information, determine the impact on the individual and community, and consider choices.

Assessment in the social studies most often takes the form of a problem-solving event, where learning is applied and demonstrated through a student's capacity to take informed action. Core themes and disciplines allow the teacher to facilitate an environment where students value the importance of active citizenship, community, and compassion.

1f. For secondary schools:

1g. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

No culture exists without some form of musical expression, whether in society or a school. Music together with all the fine arts, shares a fundamental integral place at Northeast. We have a comprehensive music program that provides student with the opportunity to create, perform, and respond to music. Through a grant, we are fortunate to have many instruments in the music classroom, which give our students the opportunity to explore music in a variety of ways. This year we have a drum set, multiple keyboards, a class set of ukuleles, boom whackers, and iPads with music apps. In our music classes, you see students working in groups, collaborating around and composing musical pieces, and reading music and playing composed pieces.

Students in fourth and fifth grade can join the chorus or band. In the winter and spring, fourth and fifth grade students perform a concert for the community. In the spring, the performing arts partners with the visual arts partners for an "Evening of the Fine Arts" event, which the Northeast community enjoys.

The Northeast art program builds sequentially a foundation of student visual art skills and knowledge. It fosters an awareness, appreciation and enjoyment of the arts. The visual arts education program develops each student's skills, knowledge and ability to communicate through visual approaches and methods. Using these skills, students express themselves creatively.

The visual art creations of Northeast students are continuously displayed through the hallways and in the library, for everyone to view and appreciate. Students create using a variety of media such as oil and tempera paint, charcoal, clay, and watercolors. Each art task incorporates literacy with titles such as Louise Loves Art, Viva Frida, and Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood, to name a few. Math is incorporated into the art classroom by having students complete art projects that explore shapes, symmetry, proportion, and measurement.

Our Physical Education program is designed to encourage students to become physically active for a lifetime. Northeast students are taught developmentally appropriate lessons that include a wide variety of movement experiences and skills, and the development of social skills and self-concept. Students learn to play team sports such as basketball, baseball, soccer, volleyball, and floor hockey. During the physical education class, students learn stretching technique and cardio exercises.

Each year, Northeast participates in the Jump Rope for Heart program, raising money for the American Heart Association, while students become proficient in jumping rope. We also have a cheerleading team that performs during our Monthly Spirit Assemblies.

At Northeast, we are proud of our schoolwide behavior management process, and our "Choosing Love" and "Second Step" programs that complement that process. At Northeast, we all speak the same language when it comes to behavior – we believe students thrive on consistency. We use the green color as a goal to have a great day, by following school rules of "Work Hard and Be Nice". Teachers create individual behavior plans and goals to assist students in maximizing their "green days".

The Northeast Social Worker and School Psychologist, respectively, push into the classrooms to model lessons from the “Second Step” and “Choosing Love” programs, and to support teachers in teaching self-regulating skills to students. We have seen an increase in the number of students who are able to self-regulate emotions based on strategies taught in the classroom, resulting in a decrease of behavior referrals.

To celebrate our community and pride at Northeast, we have monthly Spirit Assemblies where we recognize students for perfect attendance, making good choices, and for “Working hard and Being Nice.” Each grade level shares what they are currently learning in the classroom, and we end the assembly by singing the Northeast School Song written by our music teacher.

3. Academic Supports:

3a. Students performing below grade level

Currently, 63% of Northeast students respond successfully to our high-quality core instruction in the general education classroom. In Tier I general education, the classroom teacher implements research-based best practices and individualized accommodations for all students, as needed. Tier I practice effectiveness is measured continuously by measuring progress in student learning, as manifested by work samples, common assessments, and benchmarks.

At times, a teacher may identify a student who is struggling to learn the core curriculum in the general education classroom. When this occurs, the teacher completes the descriptive paperwork, and our support staff team meets with the teacher to design a learning plan. This begins a multi-tiered system of individualized support interventions called SBRI, or Scientifically Researched Based Interventions. This is a school-wide, multi-level instructional system for ensuring student success. SRBI at Northeast School integrates screening, progress monitoring, and data-based decision making for instruction and student movement within the multilevel system.

Through this process, students receive academic support in a small group with the classroom teacher, and then again with a support staff member. This represents Tier II support for learning. Currently at Northeast, 31% of students receive Tier II intervention. The learning plan continues until our progress monitoring indicates that the student has reached proficiency in all academic areas.

We have many programs that are used that Northeast teachers use to provide specific instruction depending on the need of students, for example: Wilson Program, LLI, Lexia, Read Naturally, Do the Math, Dream Box, etc. The progress monitoring is implemented on a six-week cycle. After each cycle, the student learning plans are reviewed, and academic services are adjusted as appropriate.

If a student is continuing to struggle in manner that Tier II cannot well address, Tier III supports are considered, and the student plan updated. At Northeast current, 7% of our students receive Tier III support. Tier III interventions are designed to provide a greater intensity of support than Tier II, characterized by more frequent and focused individualized learning opportunities for students. These interventions are delivered to a student who has not sufficiently accelerated his or her progress with Tier II interventions; or the school’s SRBI team might determine that assessment data shows that a student’s needs require greater immediate support.

Tier III Intervention is implemented with a smaller student-teacher ratio, a longer duration of intervention, continued detailed attention to individual learning styles and the social environment, and more frequent progress monitoring. As in Tier II, students who receive Tier III Intervention remain part of the general education classroom.

Northeast School has two reading teachers, a math interventionist, two special education teachers, and a team of para educators who service students during daily 30-minute intervention blocks scheduled in each grade level. Northeast’s SRBI team meets weekly for an hour to review student needs and all assessment or behavior data. Students move in and out of the classroom seamlessly throughout the day; everyone is moving around the school for a variety of reasons to ensure everyone is getting what they need when they need it.

We credit the robust implementation of our strong SRBI process with our success in eliminating the achievement gap at Northeast School. We believe that among our fundamental strengths are being proactive, and building relationships with students, colleagues, and the community. As a result, all students learn and grow at Northeast.

3b. Students performing above grade level

The multi-tiered system of support works equally well for the needs of students who are advanced in their learning. While the basic process is the same, the specific interventions are different. How we act and respond both when students struggle and when students succeed builds a culture of educators responding to the needs of all children. Northeast staff understand that their role in addressing the academic needs of each student is built on the core foundational belief that all students can, and deserve the opportunity to, learn at the individual appropriate level and pace.

The Tier strategy for advanced learners also includes differentiated instruction, which typically occurs in flexible small groups within the regular classroom or during regular instructional time. The key principles of differentiated instruction include: student-centered instructional practices and materials that are standards-based and grounded in research; instruction that has clear objectives, with focused activities to reach those objectives; assessment results used to shape future instructional decisions; multiple ways for students to demonstrate learning and their mastery of essential content and skills; and varied instructional pacing, depth, and complexity.

The differentiated instruction we provide at Northeast is targeted to accelerate and deepen learning for advanced learners. Our classroom teachers provide flexible instructional grouping of students based on their continuously identified needs, assigning projects and independent or group work accordingly. We provide multiple enrichment opportunities for all students to complement our Tiered support. For instance, we have a Student Council, a News Crew (which publishes a monthly video newsletter), a Yearbook Club and a Spanish Club.

Instructional practice for advanced learners at Northeast centers on higher order thinking and questioning assignments that are open-ended and evidential proof and reasoning. Students are tested to qualify for our district Gifted and Talented program. If a student qualifies through research-based assessments, he or she joins the additional programs and participates in additional group activities with a Gifted and Talented teacher.

3c. Special education

As indicated previously, Tier III interventions are designed to provide a higher intensity of support than Tier II, including more frequent and focused individualized learning opportunities for those students. These interventions might be for students who have not made sufficient, or sufficiently accelerated progress, after Tier II interventions. Or the Northeast SRBI team might determine that assessment data indicates that a given student require greater immediate support. Tier III Intervention is implemented with a smaller student-teacher ratio, a longer duration of intervention, detailed attention to individual learning styles and the social environment, and more frequent progress monitoring. Students are in the classroom with their grade level peers, as we focus on pushing staff into the classroom rather than pulling students out, for instructional support.

Close collaboration between the special education and general education staff at Northeast School fosters a learning environment that supports all students, as they work towards achieving Vernon's rigorous standards. Individual needs are identified, and specific programs are designed and planned, through Northeast's Planning and Placement team (PPT) process. The PPT process and team identify students who are eligible for special education, and collaboratively develops Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) for each student. Creation of the IEP and the delivery of services are done in collaboration with the general education teacher, parents, and related service providers. These services are implemented within the Least Restrictive Environment. As is the case with Tier II, Northeast students who receive Tier III intervention and Special Education services remain part of the general education classroom.

Parents and families are valuable and meaningful partners in the Planning and Placement Team process. Vernon Public Schools and Northeast believe that on-going communication and collaboration between home and school are vital in fostering success for students.

3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered

3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

A Vernon Public Schools administrator walked out of a typical Northeast classroom while remarking, “It’s hard to tell who the teacher is in there!” In fact, he was not criticizing. He knows there is one grade-level teacher who owns that classroom. Rather, his comment reflects the number of active adults in the room – for example, a Para Educator, the Math Interventionist, the Principal, the classroom teacher (of course), and a parent volunteer. All are working with either individuals or small groups. There is a lot of personalized attention and learning going on. This is the learning environment we have at Northeast School.

When you walk through the doors of NES, you immediately feel a positive school community. It is all about positive relationships at Northeast School. The staff prides itself in getting to know every single student in the building. Students are greeted by name by a variety of staff from the moment they step off the bus or walk in the front door, to the time they get to their classroom. Music plays in the halls as students enter the building to create an uplifting environment.

Northeast classrooms and hallways manifest the School’s personalized environment. Student work is strung across classrooms, and dresses classroom walls. As you stroll through the Northeast building you will see the Prize Cabinet from which ticket-earning students choose rewards, banners (e.g. “Learners Today, Leaders Tomorrow”), Heart Healthy Challenges and Jump Rope Awards in the gym, Choosing Love encouragement, “What Do You Love about Reading” descriptions from students, pictures of the NES Student Council members, and all kinds of student work.

In the hallways, you will also see the “Word of the Week” as well as an “Idiom of the Week”, where students are given the definition, and are encouraged to learn and use that new vocabulary. Students who take the challenge post their work in the hall. You will also find a giant multiplication chart for students to practice their facts as they are waiting at the bathroom area; and a math problem of the week for each grade level to extend their thinking. A giant number chart is outside the younger-grade classrooms, so students can count the number of days we have been in school. Adorning walls all around the building is high-quality student work, including the specific State Standard students are demonstrated by the work.

These artifacts signal subliminally, to both students and adult members of the School community, that what each of us does matters. As learners and contributors, we naturally want individual attention and recognition, particularly when provided in a nurturing environment. While easier said than done, this is another critical part of Northeast success.

Meanwhile, inside each classroom, teachers and staff are supporting each student to do their best. Students are teaching one another and encouraging each other to do his or her best. Students set individual math and reading goals that are monitored regularly. These goals are celebrated when met, and new goals are set.

Our school mantra is “Work Hard and Be Nice.” In a K-5 school, this motto is easily understood by all and upheld. Students are clear about their expectations. Learning takes place in a positive safe environment where everyone is working to his or her potential.

While visiting Northeast, one can sense that the entire staff works collaboratively to make sure all students are getting what each individual needs to be successful - you can feel it in the air!

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The reality is that students spend more than 80% of their lives outside of the school or school activities. Moreover, what goes on at home has an important effect – positive or negative – on what our Northeast students do at school. So, we have thought hard about engaging ways to integrate families into our school community. A critical part of the overall success of Northeast is interacting effectively with parents and guardians.

The Northeast Social Worker and School Psychologist, together and respectively, play an important part in parent connectivity, as normal parts of their professional roles. But so also do the Principal and teachers. Home visits, welcomed by parents, are common. Teachers communicate regularly with parents, providing updates on behavior and/or academic progress, aided in part by texting apps for mobile phones (e.g. SeeSaw).

A quote from one parent is representative: "I'm so happy with NES. I love that I can call you guys and talk to you about anything. I've been through some other principals at NES, and [the current principal] has the best communication – staff call just to check in with parents. [The Principal] has changed the school and also the children. I just feel like it's a safe, happy school!"

NES staff, from the Principal to the Para Educators, self-organize to become respective point persons for individual students and families, while constantly sharing relevant news with the rest of the team. This communication is coordinated in part by weekly SRBI meetings and the like – but it happens naturally and automatically, without bureaucracy.

The informational glue is the Principal, who is continuously informed about virtually everything; but without the need to micromanage. This is how a lot gets done both effectively and efficiently. Most decisions don't need to go up and down a hierarchy for approval. Where the Principal is consulted, she decides quickly in most cases, while communicating appropriately with others.

The Principal is well connected with everything that goes on at Northeast, and her overarching Education philosophy is that “relationships matter”. She has a personal story for every student in the school. The Principal greets students every morning to “Kidzpop” music, asking students to dance with her as they enter the building. The Principal is highly respected by students. She is authentically fun, strict, caring, and consistent, at the same time.

Meanwhile, regularly scheduled communication keeps parents and families up to date: e.g. the NES monthly video newsletter, “NE News NE Time” (a video newscast created by students); the monthly calendar; and parent/teacher conferences.

Northeast School partners closely with its PTO to offer Paint Nights (some of whose output finds its way to the walls of Northeast hallways), Movie Nights, and dances. The Principal and teachers routinely attend these events, to mingle and interact informally with parents, and to signal support for the NES community.

Other Northeast events include the Ice Cream Social and Book Fairs. At VIP Breakfasts, students invite whomever they want from home to teacher-sponsored breakfast at NES. Instructionally oriented events include the Country Expo and the Wax Museum, along with our regular Math and Reading nights.

This extensive range of parent involvement and connections help drive positive student behavior and academic performance. We believe that it is critically important that our parents communicate the importance of education to their children. Therefore, NES offers and encourages a wide variety of ways by which families can be involved through volunteering, chaperoning, or just having lunch with his/her child – all with the goal of learning and adapting together as a community.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Each year as a school, we focus on coming together to learn, explore new strategies, and collaborate with one another, all in a safe place. It is a place where we can take risks and try out new strategies. Northeast School celebrates its successes, and always looks for ways to get better.

Collaborative and adaptive leadership are embodied in this year's Professional Learning Plan at Northeast, and the related activities of our Professional Learning Communities (which include grade-level teams, the Instructional Leadership Team, and full staff meetings). This year, our PLC emphasis is on adult learning about social/emotional needs of children. We are implementing professional development around the

“Choosing Love” and “Second Step” programs, for example. And we are following a book study on “Anxiety and Depression in the Classroom – Guide to Fostering Self-Regulation in Young Students”.

Teachers are given time to plan and create lessons. Teachers know that they are supported, and that the Principal understands that the wellbeing of teachers is just as important as the meeting the needs of students, in a trickle-down effect. She gives teachers the support they need, whether it is time to plan, support with classroom management, or support with parental issues.

The Principal always makes a point to check in on every classroom at least once each day to see if teachers need anything (e.g. copies, questions, or even a bathroom break!). In general, teachers believe that the greatest support they can get is the gift of time; accordingly, the Principal limits the number of lengthy meetings, while also sharing important information with by a weekly newsletter. This is one example of many of how the Principal changes practices appropriately based on teacher feedback.

Northeast is a school that prides itself on always being its best. Everyone at the school always puts student learning first. Teachers are constantly researching additional strategies to best meet the needs of their students. Walking through the building, you always see teachers and staff collaborating to make sure every child’s needs are being met.

The Principal is continuously building the capability and capacity of her teachers. She knows each teacher’s strengths, and has teachers share those abilities with others. At the end of each school year, the teachers define a professional learning goal for the following year. With this goal in mind, the Principal prides herself in finding additional articles, workshops and professional development to grow each of the teachers at the school.

Support staff is also provided with professional development. Support staff is crucial to the success of our students, and it is essential that they are also provided the professional development they need.

Our school is a family. We work together to ensure not only that every student gets what he or she needs to be their best, but that each teacher gets what they need to be the best as well. The overall result is universal and joint commitment to help each student succeed.

4. School Leadership:

What are the keys to Northeast Elementary School success? It is difficult to explain in a few words. When one talks to staff and parents about what makes NES tick, you hear adjectives (e.g. from survey results) like: “Give kids what they need when they need it – no limits... More than academics – it’s social, emotional, and home needs... Proactive, anticipate, and plan... Many, many programs, activities, and interventions... Well-oiled machine... Have fun, like each other, love to laugh... Everyone knows every student... Everyone knows what is going on...”

The core of Northeast School’s culture and operating model is blended leadership from multiple levels. The common theme – the glue binding the blended leadership – is that everyone here at Northeast is working together for students.

There is the single-point accountability of the School Principal. The buck starts and stops with her. She sets the tone (the “talk”) and models the behavior (the “walk”). She is in the school every day (except for district meetings) and can be contacted 24/7. She knows how to bring out the best in students and staff. The Principal believes that to turn around a school and set the foundation for continuous growth, the principal must make that administrative role a life style. In large part because of this belief, Northeast has made consistent progress over the year, exemplified by School of Distinction status for the overall performance for all students. The achievement gap does not exist at Northeast!

Yet there is much too much to be done at NES for one person. Creativity and good ideas cannot be limited to one person. Nor do we have time for the hundreds of decisions that are made each day at Northeast to be run hierarchically through one person. Decisions and actions must be efficiently collaborative. Indeed,

leadership itself at NES is collaborative and collective, necessarily to achieve together what we must. This unusual form of leadership works at NES because of the culture we have established, comprising all the practices and behaviors discussed previously.

Furthermore, the leadership model at Northeast is adaptive. Too much changes too often and too quickly for leadership not to be adaptive, on a day-to-day, week-to-week, and annual basis. Structure at NES breeds stability – which is good, of course. But we can't be rigid. Whether it's an unexpected staff absence, a weather problem, a student disruption, a VIP visitor, a new student, a new policy or program – whatever the change may be, we must be agile and quick on our feet.

Students, families, teachers, support staff, and the School Principal work hard at Northeast Elementary School. We are proud – and feel fortunate – about what we have accomplished thus far. There is much to be done, however. This is why there is so much satisfaction potential at NES, and why we love what we do.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The persistent focus at Northeast Elementary School is to accelerate the success of all students – academically, socially, and emotionally. Overarching the hundreds of decisions and choices made each day in each classroom, by students and adults, are three governing strategies: 1) establishing a safe, orderly, and purposeful learning environment; 2) setting high academic expectations, continuously monitoring progress, and adjusting instruction to achieve personalized learning goals for each student; and 3) promoting effective communication between the school and families to engage parents and guardians in the learning process, both in the classroom and at home.

Our simple but powerful student mantra is “Work Hard and Be Nice” to reach our goals. It reflects an environment where students work hard toward their academic goals, while learning how to contribute positively to our school community. Visitors comment how happy the staff is and how there is happiness and humor throughout the school. Together, Northeast staff, students, and families have built a school culture that brings out the best in each of our children and adults.

What we have found that proactive action is more important than talk and good intentions. The stakes are very high. We know if we don’t construct the foundation of reading, math, social skills, and self-learning during elementary school years, the student members of the Northeast family will have a tough time in Grade 6 and beyond. We are “all-in” when it comes to our students and families – we want everyone to succeed at Northeast and we come together as a strong community.

Therefore, we believe Northeast’s fundamental strength is our proactive team approach to teaching the “whole child”. We do this by having many members of the team plan, prepare, and work together: classroom teachers, para educators, school psychologist, social worker, special education teachers, instructional specialists, office and building support staff, the principal, and, of course, the families and the students themselves. We set examples for each other on how to work hard, with intelligence and imagination, and with a positive attitude. We recognize and celebrate successes, laugh and have fun, while striving continuously to do better.

Like a healthy family, everyone knows what everyone is doing at NES. Particularly within the respective K-2 and Grade 3-5 wings of the School, adult staff members are familiar with the personality traits, learning habits, and family situations of each student. That way, teaching responsibilities and related information are readily shared. Students gain more access to more caring adults, and personalization is maximized allowing us to maximize our impact with our proactive approach.

Teachers know students inside and out. We make home visits and have a 24/7 communication to be proactive. We are constantly in communication after school and into the even hours, to allow parents/guardians to communicate with us immediately instead of waiting for the next school day. This approach works well with behaviors as well as academically - because of this our behavior problems are practically non-existent because we put systems and procedures in place to prevent behaviors.

Because of our proactive approach, Northeast is often referred to as a calm, stimulating learning environment – and this is the way we like it!