

U.S. Department of Education
2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Cross Creek Charter Academy
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 7701 Kalamazoo Avenue SE
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Byron Center State MI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 49315-9534

County Kent County

Telephone (616) 656-4000 Fax _____

Web site/URL

<https://www.nhaschools.com/schools/cross-creek-charter-academy/en>

E-mail 11.jnieuwkoop@nhaschools.com

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* Mr. Joseph Nieuwkoop E-mail 11.jnieuwkoop@nhaschools.com
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Cross Creek Charter Academy Tel. (616) 656-4000

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 Mr. Patrick Barbour
(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, leave blank.*

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 2023 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2022-2023) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district.**)

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 in the school as of October 1, 2022 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Students
PreK	25
K	83
1	84
2	84
3	83
4	87
5	87
6	78
7	87
8	81
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	779

*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):
- 0.4 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 11.4 % Asian
 - 10.3 % Black or African American
 - 11.7 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.5 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 65.7 % White
 - 0 % 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 2021 - 2022 school year: 4%

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, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	13
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	18
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	31
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	778
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Burmese, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Tamil, Hindi, Telugu, Bosnian, Albanian, Kinyarwanda, Nepali, Swahili, and Amharic

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 12 %
97 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 40 %
 Total number students who qualify: 315

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 9 %
Total number of students served 73

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services with an IEP should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>6</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>14</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>9</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>40</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>2</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 1 %
Total number of students served: 11

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 17

11. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	4
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	28
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	12
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	15
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	8

12. 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 28:1

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

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	93%	96%	96%	97%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **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 2022.

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%

15. 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.

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

Challenging each child to achieve through academic excellence, parent partnerships, student responsibility, and moral focus.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

https://app.sharebase.com/#/document/111368/share/239-XBMhsM7UVbGN3SUylQgHuB8--MwA_

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

All students are selected by random lottery which is monitored by state and authorizer guidelines, procedures, and policies. All potential students are eligible for the lottery if they complete the application within the predetermined "open enrollment window" and meet all state eligibility requirements in a public school as outlined by the state (state of Michigan residency, age, etc.).

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Cross Creek Charter Academy is a young 5s/kindergarten through eighth grade public charter school located on the southside of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Our school is chartered by Central Michigan University and is overseen by a board of directors made up of Cross Creek parents and community members. It was founded in 1997 with 114 students. It currently enrolls more than 780 students with lengthy waiting lists in all grades. Cross Creek is part of National Heritage Academies (NHA), a charter school management company that operates more than 100 schools across nine states and serves more than 60,000 students. While we are an NHA school that utilizes a common curriculum and a unified approach to teaching and learning, we have a unique culture that prioritizes relationships, collaboration with parents, shared values, and a commitment that no student ever slips through the cracks. Three of our board members, including our board president, have served for more than 20 years. We have a dedicated staff with little staff turnover. Together, we follow through on our shared mission to “challenge each child to achieve through academic excellence, parent partnerships, student responsibility, and Moral Focus.”

When Cross Creek Charter Academy opened 26 years ago, it did not serve the same population that it does today. Within the past five to seven years, Cross Creek has gradually changed to a diverse community that more accurately reflects the local demographics. We are a Moral Focus school with high academic standards whose students continually outperform neighboring districts on standardized state testing. In addition, students who leave Cross Creek at the end of their eighth-grade year are well-prepared to excel both academically and socially in high school and beyond. Each day, our students recite the Cross Creek Creed and follow through on the last line’s call to action: “I will make this world a better place because of what I do today.”

The Cross Creek staff is dedicated to the families we serve today, as well as those we have served over the past 26 years. To support our families, teachers and administrators have adapted and developed key strategies to meet the needs of students from every background and every demographic. Our strategies align with the four pillars of academic excellence (we reach higher), Moral Focus (we build character), student responsibility (we expect more), and parent partnerships (we work together).

We reach higher through recently updated curricula in all areas that meet the needs of a diverse group of learners. We utilize a robust set of curriculum tools, specifically in English language arts (ELA) and math, that meet all state standards and give our students college opportunities. Specific examples include research-based programs in ELA such as phonics instruction, read aloud and shared reading instruction, writing and grammar, and literature seminar. In math, we believe that every person is a math person. We have utilized programs and tools that reinforce a growth mindset by focusing on conceptual understanding, number sense, and the development of problem-solving skills that can be transferred to real-life decision making. We have a common assessment system that regularly measures student growth and progress so teachers have the data needed to adjust instruction quickly and efficiently.

In addition to strategies applied in core instruction, the Cross Creek master schedule includes dedicated intervention time for math and ELA in grades kindergarten through eighth grade. Data from benchmark assessments, common assessments, Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) tests, and state tests are used to identify students for intervention groups. During this intervention time, academic specialists, ELL teachers, and paraprofessionals partner with teachers to provide targeted instruction in small groups. Students are progress monitored every two or four weeks to provide the targeted intervention that will fill gaps in learning.

We build character through nine values that are taught and reinforced throughout the academic year. Values such as wisdom, respect, gratitude, courage, and integrity are taught daily through an age-specific curriculum. As students progress from young 5s through eighth grade, their understanding of each value deepens, and they learn specific ways to put these values into action. Teachers use a wide collection of books from diverse perspectives that reinforce the values being taught.

We expect more through a schoolwide behavior and reward system called Behave with Care. Through this

program, students are rewarded and acknowledged for following our four schoolwide expectations: Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Be Nice. Students are given “iCatch” tickets for modeling these behaviors. Our Moral Focus values serve as the foundation of Behave with Care.

We work together through building and maintaining authentic partnerships with parents. We excel in communication and collaboration with parents to ensure their children achieve. Parent surveys are given regularly, volunteers are abundant, and we have a dedicated parent room for volunteers.

While the staff at Cross Creek has adapted and grown with the demographic changes, the foundations and traditions that have made Cross Creek the best choice for parents and students have remained the same. Cross Creek Charter Academy is a school with a diverse population and a dedicated, caring staff. We provide students with a rigorous curriculum that is balanced with support and high expectations. Our drive for continuous improvement to meet the needs of our changing population makes Cross Creek Charter Academy the school of choice for our families.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Beginning in our very youngest grades, Cross Creek uses research-based practices to grow our readers and to address Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in ELA. In grades young 5s to second grade, students receive daily whole group instruction in phonemic awareness using the Heggerty curriculum. Teachers use the curriculum From Phonics to Reading to instruct our young learners using a sequenced and systematic approach. Students build a bank of sight words by analyzing the phonetic structure of high frequency words and by practicing these words in authentic reading. The daily writing students engage in also helps to reinforce the phonics rules they learn. Students are regularly assessed on their reading fluency using the program AIMSWeb+. This assessment allows teachers to analyze student growth and allows teachers to intervene with small or individualized instruction for students who need additional support. The online program Lexia is another resource that allows students to receive individualized instruction in the five domains of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary) with the goal of filling in gaps in learning that may be present in students. This program can also be a formative assessment tool as it allows teachers to see areas in which students may be experiencing difficulty and to intervene with individualized instruction.

All our learners, from grade young 5s to grade eight, are instructed in reading comprehension and vocabulary development as these are essential skills that can be taught in conjunction with phonics in our younger grades. Cross Creek uses a read aloud and shared reading curriculum in order to teach the comprehension-based learning standards. The structure of this curriculum follows the highly effective instructional practice of teacher modeling, teacher and students practicing together, and students applying the skills to their own reading. Using a read aloud, teachers model how to employ various comprehension skills by thinking out loud while reading the text. The skills are reinforced through shared reading. All students have their eyes on a common text. Comprehension skills are still modeled by the teacher, but students are more engaged in the application of these skills. Finally, students are given the opportunity to apply these skills while independently reading books of their choice.

Vocabulary development and listening and speaking skills are included in the context of the read aloud and shared reading curriculum. Lexia is also used in upper grades as another instructional tool for helping students to analyze word structures and to build vocabulary.

In writing, the CCSS focus on three different types of writing: argumentative, informational, and narrative. Cross Creek provides instruction to our students in these three types of writing with increased complexity as students age. Cross Creek also provides students with instruction and practice on responding to reading in written form.

Students are assessed twice per month on literacy skills using a common assessment. This allows teachers the opportunity to see how well students are understanding the content and to address any misconceptions that may exist. Cross Creek administers the NWEA MAP test twice per year as a means of assessing student growth in literacy. Finally, all students in third grade and above take the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP).

1b. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

At Cross Creek Charter Academy, we strive to use our mathematics curriculum to create critical thinkers and problem solvers. We utilize the CCSS and the Mathematical Practices to foster this in our learners. We have implemented the Bridges math curriculum alongside Number Corner and Math Stories to teach these standards in grades kindergarten to five, and use Illustrative Math in grades six to eight. The online math tool Dreambox is also part of our math curriculum. This tool allows students to work at their own pace. These curricular tools were chosen because they align with the standards taught, and they allow students to

learn how to think, discuss ideas, and problem solve in math.

The teachers at Cross Creek use many different instructional approaches to meet the needs of various learners and content strands. In grades kindergarten through fifth grade, the teachers daily use Math Stories, a curriculum created by NHA, to support many of these instructional approaches. The structure of Math Stories allows students to use visualization and modeling to make sense of word problems. It also includes the opportunity for students to share their thinking and to learn from one another. The variety of instructional approaches continue through the use of the Bridges curriculum. Inquiry style approaches are utilized throughout lessons and discussions. The approaches of these curricula are then carried over to our students in grades six to eight using Illustrative Mathematics. The focus of the instructional approaches in the upper grades is problem based. Students engage in math rich, meaningful tasks as they discuss ideas and share representations of their thoughts.

Formative and summative assessments are used schoolwide to inform our teaching and to impact student learning. In grades K-5, formative assessment takes on a wide variety of approaches. Teachers use small group and large group observations, individual work, and class discussions to help evaluate student knowledge. This knowledge helps teachers determine the pacing of instruction, which objectives to reinforce through additional instruction, and which objectives have been mastered. In grades six to eight, exit tickets, class discussions, and homework are used as a formative assessment of student knowledge. Teachers use the derived data to drive instruction for future lessons. Summative assessments for all K-8 classrooms include end of unit tests, math interims, NWEA MAP fall and spring tests, and the M-STEP. Teachers take the data from these assessments to create flexible small group opportunities for remediation or extension. The assessment data also helps the school determine how interventions should be used within the school.

The mathematics standards, curricular tools, instructional approaches, assessments, and data analysis all contribute to our goal of cultivating problem solvers, critical thinkers, and curious learners. We utilize all these tools to help students reach their potential and make maximum growth in mathematical knowledge and application.

1c. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

The science curriculum at Cross Creek Charter Academy is designed to prepare our students to be critical thinkers. We create science units based on the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and NHA's scope and sequence by utilizing the web based STEMscopes curriculum.

Various instructional tools and approaches are used to make learning concrete. Beginning in young 5s, students are immersed in literature-focused science units. Students experience science through hands-on activities, art-infused projects, learning centers, and exposure to non-fiction text. As students move through the grades, math and ELA standards are intentionally embedded into instruction, with a strong focus on informational text. In addition, science and engineering practices are emphasized. The curriculum builds on foundational skills; within each unit, the 5E model (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate and Evaluate) is used. Content is spiraled from grade level to grade level and within the Disciplinary Core Ideas such as earth, life, and physical sciences. Interactive online computer simulations review web-based curricular content. This cross-curricular approach prepares our students for the M-STEP, the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), and NHA developed common assessments.

At Cross Creek, we provide our students with opportunities to experience science in real life. A second-grade field trip to the Impressions 5 Science Center offers children the opportunity to deepen their understanding of science content in an engaging environment. Sixth grade students learn the science behind recycling various materials by running Cross Creek's recycling program. After reading the book "A Long Walk to Water," the Cross Creek middle school partners with the organization 20 Liters to gain an understanding of the steps that people in third world countries take to obtain fresh water. A middle school field trip to Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry gives students the opportunity to reinforce their understanding of scientific concepts.

Differentiation is at the forefront of our instructional methods. We offer an after-school Science,

Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Club to our third through fifth grade students. Students are encouraged to use outside-the-box thinking to promote problem solving and critical thinking skills, while working together in teams to accomplish a goal. Middle school students can compete in the Science Olympiad regional competition at a local college. Science Olympiad is taught three days per week for the whole school year.

Classroom instruction is driven by multiple forms of assessment. Unit assessments, mid-unit quizzes, labs and other activities, projects, and constructed response writing pieces are some of the ways that students are assessed on science concepts. Students in all grade levels are expected to provide evidence to support claims and scientific reasonings. Formative assessment data are analyzed by teachers to drive instruction and determine which students may need additional support.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

The goal of social studies instruction at Cross Creek Charter Academy is to prepare students to become active and knowledgeable citizens in the community. Cross Creek teachers intentionally choose engaging instructional strategies that personally connect to the lives of students.

Teachers use Michigan K-12 Social Studies Standards along with NHA's scope and sequence to ensure coverage of all content. In the lower elementary grades, students are exposed to social studies content through the use of hands-on experiences, art-infused projects, learning centers, and nonfiction text. As students grow and develop, the social studies concepts are further integrated into ELA instruction. This includes the reading of nonfiction texts, the completion of writing assignments, and the presentation of research projects. In the elementary grades, the standards are also addressed using the InquirED curriculum. InquirED is an inquiry-based curriculum that uses engaging investigations to build knowledge in history, civics, geography, and economics. In middle school the social studies standards continue to be taught in an engaging way. This includes student participation in hands-on learning through simulations, and student projects. Encore classes such as History in Film and World Wars are offered to students to deepen their understanding of social studies content.

Many grade levels at Cross Creek take content-based field trips to support their social studies learning. Second graders visit the historic Charlton Park village and participate in a history walk of downtown Grand Rapids to further develop their understanding of Michigan's history. Third graders visit The Muskegon Museum of History and Science of the Lakeshore along with the Hackley and Hume homes in Muskegon to reinforce their study of Michigan's roots in the logging industry. Fourth graders travel to the Michigan Capitol building and Michigan Historical Museum to deepen their understanding of our state government. The fourth graders' presentation of the Michigan Musical also reinforces their learning of Michigan history in a fun and entertaining way. A fifth grade trip to Greenfield Village allows children to better understand America's history by experiencing the ingenuity of several influential inventions developed in our country.

Cross Creek also teaches social studies content through the recognition and celebration of special months such as Black History Month, Women's History Month, and Asian American and Pacific Islander Month. Bulletin boards, classroom lessons, and special activities provide learning opportunities for students throughout these months.

Throughout the grades, a variety of assessments are used to measure student learning, including projects, quizzes, tests, written responses, and NHA common assessments. M-STEP data are used to measure effectiveness of instruction and student learning. Teachers consistently adapt instructional methods each year based on current best practices, assessment data, and changing student demographics.

The curricular approaches chosen at Cross Creek, along with assessment analysis, meet Michigan state standards, are appropriately rigorous, are culturally responsive, and are relevant to the lives of the students we teach. Cross Creek graduates are equipped to be successful community members.

1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:

We believe in college opportunities for every student. Our incoming young five and kindergarten students are all given shirts with the Cross Creek logo that says, “college bound.” Evidence of furthering their education beyond the twelfth grade is found throughout the building to help motivate students and remind them learning is a lifelong activity. The main hallway of the building has pennants from all former students’ universities, and every staff member’s alma mater is prominently posted above their door.

Our curriculum in the seventh and eighth grade continues the college preparatory foundation that was laid in the earlier grades across all core subjects. Our students can explore further by choosing various encore classes that extend their learning for the core curriculum. Extension classes are offered in all content areas, and they include Science Olympiad, Financial Literacy, Drama, Book Club, Math Logic, and advanced social studies classes. Students can also take encore classes that interest them and elevate their learning in physical education, language, and the arts. In addition, students can take a class in leadership and mentor students in the lower grades and those that need tutoring.

Cross Creek helps prepare our students for college and career readiness through other offerings as well. We offer National Junior Honor Society for students in the upper grades. Our eighth graders take a field trip to Central Michigan University, our authorizer, and participate in the local Career Quest Program. We offer an accelerated learner program called Excelerate. Students are invited into the program through advanced performance in the general curriculum. These students are in higher level math classes and complete extension opportunities in the ELA curriculum to earn distinction on their transcripts. This is a fluid program and students can enter in the later grades if their performance merits it.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

Cross Creek’s art program serves young 5s through eighth grade students and is based on the state and national standards for art education. Elementary art classes meet once per week throughout the school year. Beginning in young 5s, the students learn to identify shapes, lines, and patterns. As students progress through the grade levels, they build on their knowledge of art skills and content from previous grade levels. By sixth grade, students explore materials independently to create forms and construct 3D models. Middle school students can continue to develop art skills through optional courses such as Studio Art, Guided Art, Sculpturing, Art Lettering, and much more. In the summer, students can enroll in art camp which extends learning beyond the state standards.

In addition, Cross Creek has a robust music program for young 5s through eighth grade. The elementary students meet once per week to learn songs, read music, play instruments, and prepare for performances. Musical concepts are taught through the singing of songs that align with our curriculum and Moral Focus virtues. Annual concerts are a highlight for families of our elementary students and typically result in a standing room only crowd. Middle school students can continue to develop their musical skills through optional courses such as Chorale, Drum Choir, Symphonic Band, Jazz Band and Ukulele. Middle school students perform at retirement homes, local businesses, and concerts.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

The physical education (PE) program at Cross Creek is based on the K-12 National Standards. The PE curriculum supports the students in maintaining a healthy level of physical activity and fitness through learning key concepts, principles, and strategies related to movement and performance. Elementary classes meet once per week throughout the school year. The students learn the skills needed to participate in a variety of physical activities. Starting in kindergarten students learn to recognize the value of physical

activity for their personal health, enjoyment, and social interaction. This is accomplished through game-like activities that develop the students' skills in hopping, galloping, and running. As students move up through the grades, they combine these skills to learn the fundamentals of specific sports such as soccer, hockey, basketball, and volleyball. Middle school classes meet two to three times a week and last for a trimester. These classes expand on what students learned in elementary grades and are more rigorous. Some of the classes offered to middle school students are Peak Performance, Boot Camp, Yoga and Health and Fitness.

In addition to the teaching and learning of state standards, Cross Creek's physical education classes participate in fundraisers for the Leukemia Foundation, Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, and Jump Rope for Heart. These programs educate our students about the causes of these health conditions and teach them how society can help make a difference.

2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)

A certified teacher at Cross Creek teaches Spanish to students in grades two to eight. Spanish classes are held once per week for 45 minutes per session in grades two to six. The 45-minute class period includes standard lessons, music, dancing, and interactive games that reinforce the language. In second grade the students begin with the basics of identifying numbers, colors, and common words in Spanish. As the students progress through the grade levels, past lessons are combined with new concepts. Students are asked to speak in Spanish when they are answering a question and singing a song. Toward the upper grades and middle school, the students begin having conversations with each other in Spanish. At this age, the instructor also teaches the lesson in Spanish using pictures, gestures, and other supports to help the students understand what is being communicated. During the middle school years, students can take advanced Spanish to prepare for the high school placement test. Cross Creek also offers a world cultures class that focuses on cultures outside of Spanish speaking countries. The students complete research and prepare presentations on many cultures throughout our world.

2d. Technology/library/media

Our technology instructor uses the Standards for Computer Science Educators and Common Core as the basis for skills taught. These skills include keyboarding, Google Drive and Docs, Chrome OS, and basic computer skills. In addition, cyber safety is taught. Students learn how to be safe on the Internet, how to use social media appropriately, and how to set limits on technology use in everyday life. Cross Creek has hosted Chris McKenna from Protect Young Eyes to speak with our third to eighth graders about online safety. All students have a school-provided Chromebook that is monitored by teachers through the Go Guardian program to keep students safe while on the internet.

Elementary students have technology class once per week followed by time in the library to listen to the reading of a Moral Focus book and to check out new reading materials. Cross Creek has a librarian who helps to monitor student's book selections. The librarian assists to make sure the students are choosing appropriately challenging books and encourages children to try new authors and genres. Author visits are organized to introduce students to the art of writing and the amazing world of storytelling. The middle school students have technology classes two to three times per week and the classes last for one trimester. Students are given the option to enroll in a variety of classes such as Mouse Squad, Podcast, and Film & Technology.

2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share

We believe that one of the most important tasks we have as educators is to help our students become good citizens. Because of this, Cross Creek offers a full Moral Focus curriculum for all students in grades young 5s to eighth grade. The monthly virtues include wisdom, respect, gratitude, self-control, perseverance, courage, encouragement, compassion, and integrity. The virtues are taught in classrooms through daily lessons. Teachers are provided with a variety of resources to assist in the creation of these lessons. This may include the examination of literary characters who are examples and nonexamples of the monthly virtues. In addition, students complete writing assignments focused on the virtues. They may write about examples of the virtues or write about a time they exemplified the virtue in their daily lives. Students also participate in

robust conversations, create art projects, sing songs, write and perform skits or participate in other hands-on activities to help them fully understand the virtue.

Moral Focus virtues are celebrated each month as staff and students come together for an assembly. Students may also complete individual, grade level or school-wide community service projects allowing them to spread their wings into the community.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

All students from kindergarten to grade eight are assessed using the NWEA MAP fall and spring tests, and all students third grade through eighth grade are assessed using M-STEP. Cross Creek also uses AIMSWeb+ to assess the decoding and fluency development of our learners in grades kindergarten through third grade. Scores from these assessments determine which students in the school need intervention. For students with the lowest percentiles, the math and/or reading specialist provides services for flexible small groups or individuals with lessons tailored to specific learning objectives. A variety of research supported resources are used to design these lessons. Students who need less intensive support work with a paraprofessional. In first and second grade, paraprofessionals help support students' reading development through the Reading Mastery program. Grades three to five intervention groups are instructed using the Fountas and Pinnell leveled intervention program to help support fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary development. In the area of math, paraprofessionals use math stories created by NHA as well as the Do The Math program for students in first through fifth grades. These intervention programs have formative and summative assessments to help the interventionists know if the interventions are successful.

As the year progresses, classroom teachers and the math specialist use unit assessments, checkpoints, and math numeracy assessments created by NHA to analyze the grouping of students and their need for interventions. Analyzing reading growth happens in a very similar way of dialogue between the reading specialist and the classroom teachers, along with examination of common assessments and AIMSWeb+ data.

A team called the Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) meets every Friday to discuss specific student concerns. This team consists of classroom teachers, deans, special education teachers, and interventionists. When it is noticed that reading or math interventions are not resulting in the growth we would expect in a specific student, IAT brainstorms other interventions to achieve growth.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Cross Creek Charter Academy strives to ensure that all students achieve academic excellence. Teachers frequently analyze assessment data at grade level meetings to determine which students may need additional support to advance their learning. For those who show mastery of grade level expectations, we work to provide opportunities for these students to deepen their learning and/or work towards the mastery of higher grade level standards.

At times it is appropriate for our advanced learners to be taught higher grade level standards. In the areas of reading and language arts, this can take the form of reading more challenging text. Students at Cross Creek who excel at reading are encouraged to apply the comprehension skills they are being taught to books that are more complex than grade level text. Lexia and Dreambox are online programs that provide additional reading and math instruction to students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Within these programs, there are opportunities for students to work on standards from higher grade levels. In seventh and eighth grade, students who have proven to be proficient in math through daily work, assessments, and nationally normed assessments are offered the opportunity to take an accelerated math course. This allows students to move through three years of content in two years.

Allowing students to deepen their learning is critical for our advanced learners. We often refer to Bloom's Taxonomy when exploring ways to deepen student learning. Students who can remember, understand, and

apply learning objectives are challenged to evaluate, critique, or analyze those same objectives. This may involve writing book reviews as an evaluation of the quality of literature. Students may facilitate a book club to help peers construct meaning from text or produce a piece of writing in defense of a particular opinion or issue. In math, students may analyze different methods used for answering a math question, create scenarios when different math skills may be needed, or even lead a peer group to help students construct mathematical knowledge.

3c. Students with disabilities:

Cross Creek strives to tailor instruction, interventions, and assessments to meet the diverse and individual needs of special student populations. Cross Creek is intentional about closing achievement gaps, including gaps of 10 or more percentage points between subgroups as measured by the M-STEP. Currently, a gap of more than 10% exists between our special education student population and our non-special education student population.

To meet the needs of our students with disabilities and address this gap, our special education staff members closely collaborate with classroom teachers to help students achieve Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals, and to offer necessary accommodations and modifications. Special education staff members utilize the Goalbook program to aid in goal creation and ensure that specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound goals are written for our students. Accommodation logs completed by both the special education and general education teachers document evidence of accommodations being given and allow for checks on student progress. Cross Creek's special education staff regularly collaborates with staff members of other local schools, and often consults with specialists through the Kent Intermediate School District to ensure that the achievement gap is being appropriately addressed.

Cross Creek's staff members also ensure that the needs of students with disabilities who do not qualify for an IEP are being met. This is done through the creation and implementation of Section 504 plans. Section 504 plans are created with the input of parents, general education teachers, administrators, and other relevant service providers. The accommodations written in the plans allow students to access the curriculum, take assessments, and participate in all classroom activities.

When students with disabilities take assessments, Cross Creek's general education and special education staff members work to ensure students have the best possible chance at success. Assessment based accommodations listed in the IEP or Section 504 plan are implemented. Students take the assessments in appropriate settings and with necessary supports in place. Students with IEPs are progress monitored regularly so that staff members can adjust their instruction and the students' IEP goals as needed.

3d. English Language Learners:

Cross Creek strives to tailor instruction, interventions, and assessments to meet the diverse and individual needs of special student populations. Cross Creek is intentional about closing achievement gaps, including gaps of 10 or more percentage points between subgroups as measured by the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress. Currently, a gap of more than 10% exists between our English Language Learner (ELL) student population and our non-ELL education student population.

Cross Creek has a continually growing ELL population. To reach the needs of this special population, Cross Creek has recently hired a second ELL teacher to partner with our existing ELL teacher in supporting the needs of these students. Cross Creek's intentional master schedule allows the ELL teachers consistent opportunities to use research-based tools in addressing the academic needs of our English language learners. Individual language plans for each ELL student are created based on assessment data. Students are placed in flexible groups to provide them with the most appropriate and supportive learning opportunities.

Our English language learners receive support through pull-out groups, general education classroom push-in, and the online learning platforms Lexia English and Learning Ally. The ELL teachers collaborate with the general education teachers to ensure that they are supporting the learning that is taking place in the general education classroom, while addressing standards in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and

listening. ELL students are also offered after-school tutoring opportunities to reinforce their learning and to provide additional support in meeting learning objectives.

Excellent classroom instruction, intervention plans, and constant analysis of assessments support Cross Creek's top priority of meeting the diverse needs of its special student populations.

3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Cross Creek Charter Academy engages students in their learning through relationships. Teachers begin fostering positive relationships with students on the first day of school. They use a handshake or other personal greeting at the door with each student. Class contracts are built within each classroom to help students decide how everyone in the classroom is going to treat each other throughout the year. Creating opportunities for teachers and students to know each other on a personal level help students know they are a valued part of the school community. These relationships are then leveraged to motivate students to work hard each day.

We support the social and emotional growth of our students through our school's Moral Focus curriculum and our schoolwide behavior matrix. Each month, the entire school focuses on a specific virtue, and teachers daily teach lessons that connect to those virtues. We also utilize the behavior matrix to reteach and reinforce specific behaviors to help our students be safe, be responsible, be respectful, and be nice. In order to encourage students to follow the matrix, we offer incentive tickets to students who are making good choices. At the end of each month, assemblies connect the classroom lessons to the virtues, and celebrate how students in our school have shown the virtue of the month. Because the social and emotional growth of our students is highly important to our leadership and staff, we have invested in a full time social worker and two academic and behavioral support specialists.

Students' social, emotional, and academic growth is fostered in other ways as well. Within each classroom, students participate in personal goal setting. Teachers create various classroom incentives to help motivate students to reach their goals. The school also sponsors and supports many special events and clubs such as Dungeons and Dragons Club, Girls on the Run, STEM Club, Kids' Craft Fair, March Book Madness, and author visits. These opportunities help to create a feeling of community and foster a positive school environment. Fifth to Eighth grade students can select elective classes allowing each student to learn about topics of interest.

Cross Creek fosters an environment that prepares students for college or a career in many ways. We clearly communicate the value we place on college. This begins in kindergarten when incoming children receive a T-shirt that reads, "College Bound" and is further reinforced in the college pennants hanging above the classroom door of every staff member. Most importantly, students are adequately prepared for college or a career through the high academic standards we uphold across all subject areas.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Cross Creek takes pride in its relationships with families and its positive reputation within the community. The school has a high number of parent volunteers who help throughout the building daily. There is a special Parent Room in the building designated as a workspace for volunteers. There are several programs in place that help build strong connections with families. These programs and partnerships, primarily run by parent volunteers, form a well-rounded environment for students to grow academically and socially.

The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is a dedicated group of parent volunteers that works hard to support staff and students. Throughout the school year, it plans several events to help build community. It plans an annual Back to School Bash, which is an after-school event held in the fall to welcome all families to Cross Creek and to celebrate the new school year. It also offers fundraising opportunities to help raise money to support teachers in purchasing resources for their classrooms. Throughout the school year, it organizes other community-building events such as the Daddy Daughter Dance, March is Reading Month, a school roller skating party, and a Mother/Son event.

Each spring, Cross Creek third through fifth grade girls can participate in the nationally recognized Girls on the Run program. This program is run by volunteers and helps build self-confidence in pre-adolescent girls. It consists of lessons about mental and physical health, healthy relationships and involves preparing for a

regional 5K run. The participants also work together to plan and orchestrate a community service project to benefit a local organization.

Cross Creek has an advanced choir in middle school. Each year they are invited to go out into the community to perform. Most recently, they have performed at a local senior living center. They have also performed in downtown Grand Rapids at a high-profile office building, Bridgewater Place.

Cross Creek is proud of the Watch D.O.G.S (Dads of Great Students) program that invites male volunteers into the building. There is a kick-off event at the start of the school year for the volunteers and their students. One goal of this event is to explain the importance of male role models in a school. After this event, an open calendar is created for male volunteers to choose a day to help at school. Watch D.O.G.S. may help in classrooms, assist with recess duty, help with projects around the building, eat lunch with their special students and serve as an overall positive presence.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

At Cross Creek, staff works closely with the leadership team for support. Teachers meet regularly with their dean for one-on-one (O3) meetings. These O3 meetings focus on fulfilling teacher needs which may include support with curricular tools, discussion of student needs, classroom management support or observation feedback. Because of these regularly scheduled meetings, staff feels supported, and they develop a good rapport with their dean.

Cross Creek has two academic specialists on staff. These specialists are specially trained in language arts and in math. They work closely with the intervention team and with classroom teachers to provide specialized mentoring in the classroom. They observe in a non-evaluative way and then offer suggestions for how teachers and paraprofessionals can better serve their students. They also share professional development topics at staff meetings or at wing meetings.

Throughout the school year, we have several professional development days that are focused on teacher support and growth. At least two of these days are reserved for data analysis. On these days, teachers work in grade level teams analyzing data from recent assessments given in class. They use these data to formulate a plan for the next trimester. They look for students who are performing above or below grade level and for those who are on the threshold of reaching year-end goals. As a grade level team, teachers develop small group intervention activities to best meet the needs of their students during their workshop time.

Other professional development may come from NHA. When there is a new curricular tool or changes to a curricular tool, teachers and leaders attend training sessions to thoroughly learn how to implement these changes. They are provided the tools in the spring to help support implementation at the beginning of the following school year. Training in online resources is provided along with the support of experts who work on the Curriculum & Instruction team. This team offers support in ELA, math, science, social studies, and Moral Focus.

During the summer, the Cross Creek staff participates in book studies. Staff members can choose between six to eight books that are of interest to them. Recent topics included student engagement, strategies for great teachers, increasing engagement in math, and culturally responsive teaching. Teachers read these books independently over the summer. During the school year, they meet in small groups to complete a book study with other staff members who have read the same book. At the end of the school year, small groups are given the opportunity to share their learning with the entire staff.

4. School Leadership:

The success at Cross Creek Charter Academy is greatly influenced by the shared leadership approach to supporting all students. Leadership is distributed throughout the building and collaboration is key to student academic achievement and to closing the achievement gap for all students. The leaders at Cross Creek believe in modeling the Moral Focus virtues we share as a community and teach to our students. Open, transparent communication is a focus as decisions are made and initiatives are launched. Deliberate attention

to communication strengthens our community of learners. The leaders at Cross Creek strive to uphold the pillars of our mission statement which includes academic excellence (we reach higher), Moral Focus (we build character), student responsibility (we expect more) and parent partnerships (we work together).

The impact of shared leadership is directly displayed through the administrative leadership team. The leadership team consists of a school principal, a lower elementary dean serving young 5s through second grade teachers and students, an upper elementary dean serving third through fifth grade teachers and students, and a middle school dean serving sixth through eighth grade teachers and students. While the principal focuses on vision and mission, board relations, financial discipline, facilities, and the overall success of the school, our deans focus on teacher coaching and development, grade level or wing community, and the individual needs of their students. Through what we call the Dean Model, we have created three smaller communities or wings which together make up Cross Creek. Teachers and students are provided with focused and direct leadership from their dean to support student growth and academic achievement. Deans directly focus their coaching and support on the individual needs and goals of their teachers through weekly observations and O3 meetings. Leaders are in classrooms every day.

The leadership team is highly collaborative and meets daily to discuss and plan for upcoming school initiatives as well as long term planning. The administrative leadership team works together to support each other across all grade levels with student behavioral needs, special education, professional development, and student intervention. The daily meetings and collaboration of this team impacts the goals and progress of students throughout the building.

Cross Creek also focuses on shared leadership through school improvement committees. There are multiple school improvement committees that include core academic teams (ELA, math, science, and social studies), Moral Focus, student responsibility and school culture, Behave with Care, and technology. Every committee includes a chair and is composed of teachers and staff. The grade levels and departments of the school are spread between the committees, creating a balanced view of support and needs. The school improvement committees provide additional opportunities for teachers and staff to share their ideas and lead various activities, school initiatives, and programs.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Cross Creek is blessed with a beautifully diverse body of learners. Some of our students represent families that have been in America for generations, some students are children or grandchildren of immigrants, and some children are immigrants themselves. Many ethnicities and cultures are represented in our school, and we strive to not only respect, but also to celebrate the diversity of our students.

We believe representation matters. Because of this, we make careful decisions about the books we read to our students. We choose to read books that represent the cultures of the students who fill our halls and to celebrate the joy those cultures bring to our world. We strive to use several stories to represent various cultures so that we don't rely on one single story of a culture which can lead to unfair stereotypes.

We are growing our students into a generation of people who will work to make the world a better place. We teach students the ways in which various marginalized groups have been oppressed in the past to empower students to recognize and disrupt oppression that may occur now or in the future. We have zero tolerance for disrespectful words or attitudes towards any ethnic or cultural group and intervene swiftly when we obtain any knowledge of possible disrespect. We use every opportunity to encourage children to share things from their culture to help them develop pride in themselves. This type of sharing also allows other students to learn more about someone who may be different from themselves. Learning more about someone who has different beliefs or practices helps a person to grow in tolerance and to show compassion for those who experience the world in a different way.

As a staff, we are constantly striving to learn more, and to do better. We recently engaged in a professional development opportunity with Dr. Ghody Muhammad, author of "Cultivating Genius" and "Unearthing Joy." Her work and her time with us taught us the importance of embracing the genius and joy of all our learners. Celebrating our differences, taking pride in our own identity, and learning tangible ways our

students can work to disrupt oppression and bring about joy makes the teaching and learning that we do relevant and equitable for all.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

While our school's success is the result of many different strategies and practices, the one practice that stands out as being the most instrumental to this success is our commitment to each and every child's achievement. Our school mission statement is, "Challenging each child to achieve through academic excellence, parent partnerships, Moral Focus and student responsibility." Every staff member in our building believes in the potential of each child who walks through the door. While accommodations, interventions, and teacher support are provided, we do not lower our expectations for any of our students. We work diligently to make sure no child falls through the cracks. We keep our standards high, and our students rise to meet them.

As our mission statement declares, we challenge our students through academic excellence. Teachers at Cross Creek strive to create an individualized learning environment for all students. Teachers routinely analyze assessments in order to provide intervention or more challenging opportunities. Students create personal academic goals and work to achieve them throughout each trimester. Teachers partner with students to hold them accountable and to ensure they reach their fullest academic potential.

Second, we challenge our students to achieve through parent partnerships. Just like our students, we hold all our parents to a high standard. We require attendance at parent teacher conferences twice per year. If a parent does not speak English, we use a translating service in order to effectively communicate. If a parent's work schedule conflicts with conference times, we schedule an alternate time to meet or schedule a virtual conference. Skipping a conference for a child in our building is never an option.

Third, we challenge our students to achieve through Moral Focus instruction. Students are introduced to monthly Moral Focus words with daily lessons to support the monthly theme. Teachers are trained to bring these lessons into their academic, behavioral, and emotional conversations that happen naturally with individual students throughout the day.

Finally, we challenge each child to achieve by helping them grow in responsibility. We do not make excuses for children who are chronically late in turning in assignments. We believe every child can achieve. Therefore, we hold students accountable. Students who have difficulty completing homework at home due to a language barrier are offered after school tutoring funded through our ELL program. Students who have home lives that make it difficult for them to complete homework are given the opportunity to work with older students before or after school to finish assignments.

Remaining committed to our mission of challenging each student to achieve has allowed our school, and the children who attend it, to thrive.