

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Regan Nickels

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

Official School Name Reeds Brook Middle School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 28A Main Road South #A

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

City Hampden State ME Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 04444-1303

County Penobscot

Telephone (207) 862-3540 Fax (207) 862-3551

Web site/URL http://rbms.rsu22.us/ E-mail rnickels@rsu22.us

Facebook Page

https://www.facebook.com/reedsbrookmiddle/?fref

Twitter Handle =ts Google+ \_\_\_\_\_

YouTube/URL \_\_\_\_\_ Blog \_\_\_\_\_ Other Social Media Link \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Mr. Richard Lyons E-mail rlyons@rsu22.us

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name RSU #22 Tel. (207) 862-3255

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mr. Niles Parker

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

## Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

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

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

### DISTRICT

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

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

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

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	66	52	118
7	53	77	130
8	73	47	120
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	192	176	368

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 2 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 90 % White
  - 3 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 2%

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	7
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	2
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	9
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	361
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.025
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %  
2 Total number ELL

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

Greek

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 27 %  
Total number students who qualify: 99
8. Students receiving special education services: 18 %  
67 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>12</u> Autism               | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>1</u> Deafness              | <u>10</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness        | <u>22</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>4</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>6</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment    | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>3</u> Mental Retardation    | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed               |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	21
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	10
Paraprofessionals	12
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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.

<b>Required Information</b>	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	94%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

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

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

Reeds Brook Middle School, a supportive learning community, challenges all students to achieve individual success.

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

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Reeds Brook Middle School is in Hampden, Maine which is located in central Maine on the Penobscot River in Penobscot County and is bordered to the north by Bangor, Maine's third largest city. Reeds Brook students hail primarily from the communities of Hampden and Newburgh. Newburgh is still very rural while Hampden serves mostly as a bedroom community for people working in Bangor. The district communities are similar culturally and racially with no single, identifiable minority group representing more than 4% of the school enrollment. More than 40% of Hampden residents are college educated compared with a statewide average of 27.3% and education is highly valued and supported.

Reeds Brook Middle School was built 21 years ago and now sits on a contiguous campus alongside a primary school, an elementary school and a recently built high school, Hampden Academy. The educational programming and facilities have proven to be significant draws for young families. The town of Hampden has already surpassed the 2020 population projections contained in the 2010 comprehensive plan and Hampden was recognized with the top spot in 2013 as The Best Town for Young Families in Maine (NerdWallet Finance, 2013).

Support for education from parents and the community has been and continues to be strong, both financially and program-wise, with an active and involved Board of Directors. There are two parent booster groups at Reeds Brook Middle School that support music and athletics by helping to fund unfunded components of both programs. Sports teams and the music groups all perform very successfully in regional and state competitions and the participation rate is higher than average for similar middle schools. Co-curricular participation has been a traditional cornerstone of student achievement right alongside academics.

In the tradition of optimal learning, Reeds Brook Middle School offers a multitude of programs, strategies and opportunities to encourage and challenge all students to develop their full potential. Since the opening of Reeds Brook Middle School, students have been held to high academic expectations. One of the school's first milestones occurred in 1997 when Reeds Brook Middle School became just one of five middle schools in the state to be accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The school earned reaccreditation in 2007 and is moving into its third cycle for evaluation. The continuing rigor and study of implemented curriculum and expected learning targets is ongoing. Work completion accountability and the insertion of assigned academic extensions to offer enrichment, intervention and attention to necessary executive functioning skill development also serve as evidence of the tradition of excellence. All academic areas, including guidance curriculum for social-emotional and career readiness development, have well articulated scopes and sequences aligned to national standards.

There have been significant milestones along Reeds Brook's double decade journey that have shaped the school that has become. Innovation, community involvement and citizenship are traditions at Reeds Brook just as strong as academic achievement. One such milestone related to innovation was the implementation of the Maine Laptop Initiative in 2002. Over a decade later, technology use and application at Reeds Brook Middle School is solidly present and is considered essential to school progress. Teachers have a comfort and familiarity with technology as a teaching tool, and students and staff rely on it for routine and novel learning experiences.

Community involvement hit a milestone through the building and use of an onsite School Garden and Hoop House that promoted the inclusion of community volunteerism at our middle school and has resulted in our school cafeteria providing fresh greens and vegetables to students on a seasonal basis. Since the inception of this school project, volunteerism through the formation of booster groups has grown steadily and parents continue to find relevant and beneficial ways to partner with the school. One such booster's project, the building of a soundproof music room, helped to support a one of kind accomplishment of a three-time State Jazz Band Title for Reeds Brook Middle School.

Traditions are at the heart of Reeds Brook Middle School's success with school citizenship and climate. The school plans and celebrates "The Best First Day Ever" each year where our Rebel Pride Values are celebrated and emphasized. Values of Honesty, Compassion, Responsibility and Respect are priorities that

drive our emphasis on school pride, self-conduct, citizenship and reaching full potential. Throughout the year students are recognized for their efforts and reminded of the essentiality of their school and social commitments. The fruit of this work is the remarkable reputation that Reeds Brook Middle School students earn in the community from their positive interactions, participation and communication. This community recognition is the measure of successfully educating and preparing the whole child in partnership with parents and community. Reeds Brook Middle School recognizes that school success is an all-encompassing endeavor and we strive to address the needs of the middle schooler in everything we do and deliver.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

The Regional School Unit (RSU) #22 school district is committed to the optimal learning of all students. Reeds Brook Middle School (RBMS) fully supports the forwarding of the district mission and utilizes school core curriculum as a critical structure to address it. As RSU #22 continues to move toward meeting 2018 graduation expectations (which will demand all high school students graduate with proficiency-based diplomas), the school now looks at proficiency learning targets and aligns units of study to provide opportunity for targets to be instructed and proficiency demonstrated. Rather than only the high school being responsible to report student proficiency, Reeds Brook Middle School has identified priority targets at each grade level on which teachers formally report at the conclusion of each ranking period. The curriculum and the school's stated expectations for academic achievement are well aligned through a process that included the study of best educational practices, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Educate Standards coupled with fidelity to Reeds Brook Middle School's Mission Statement.

All of Reeds Brook Middle School's content curricula encourage students to understand concepts, develop a flexible repertoire of skills, and gain insight into civic values and responsibilities. The mission statement's academic expectations evolved from a highly self-reflective process that included students, staff, and parents input and feedback. Curriculum and instruction encourage students to be life-long learners by connecting what they study to the world around them.

Some examples of the alignment between the curriculum and the school's stated expectations for academic achievement are:

#### Social Studies

Social studies curriculum and instruction encourages students to use appropriate resources to seek, access, apply, evaluate and share knowledge about history, economics, culture, civics, and geography. Students are expected to be proficient in using a variety of research and analytical tools including electronic media and traditional library resources. Students are tested on their ability to question and think critically and creatively, and to identify and apply solutions to historical problems presented to them. In addition to technology being integrated into the curriculum at each grade level, students are engaged at different points in the school year in interdisciplinary units with ELA.

#### Science

Science instruction and curriculum is designed to increase students' ability to question and think critically and to be able to identify and apply solutions to problems through inquiry based learning. As active participants in the Maine Physical Science Partnership, Reeds Brook Middle School science teachers have planned and participated in professional development that has shifted curriculum and instruction to increase hands-on activity and a deeper understanding of science concepts. The middle school's grade span prioritizes instruction in earth, life and physical sciences. Science practices are regularly emphasized in tandem with essential content.

#### English Language Arts (ELA)

Lessons and assessments are designed to teach students to read, write, speak, and listen effectively. Technology is integrated into the curriculum at each grade level through research, writing and reading assignments, and presentations. Additionally, there are many opportunities for ELA students to creatively share their knowledge through visual and artistic modes of expression. Through the study of both fiction and nonfiction texts, students are taught to think critically about characters and plots, and are regularly asked to identify and apply solutions to conflicts posed in the texts they read. A unique feature of the ELA curriculum is that students are asked to apply their new knowledge to their own experiences and/or issues in today's society. Engaging opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding, appreciation, and knowledge of these connections are provided through mock trials, classroom debates, and school wide volunteer opportunities at Special Olympics events. Lastly, another unique experience provided to Reeds Brook Middle School students is a 50 minute writing period, every other day, that is supplemental to their

daily ELA class. During this 50 minute period, students are engaged in the Lucy Calkins Units of Study curriculum.

## Math

The goal of mathematics instruction at RBMS is for students to reason abstractly and quantitatively, to make sense of problems and to persevere in solving them. These are the first two process standards of the Common Core that, along with the Maine Cohort for Customized Learning's curriculum, form the structure of our mathematics curriculum. Students are expected to gain in mathematical fluency by practicing computational skills with integers, decimals and fractions. Students prepare for higher level math classes by studying proportional reasoning and algebra concepts and learn to apply their understanding to real world problems. Technology is incorporated into math classes to provide both individual practice and a way to represent or model problems.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Development of well-rounded, informed, and experienced citizens is at the heart of a Reeds Brook Middle School education. Experiences in the arts, foreign language, health, physical education, technology, library, and guidance, are all prioritized in a RBMS student's schedule. Academic extension periods are also built into our schedule to allow for Response to Intervention (RtI) and enrichment needs which may lie outside core subject instruction yet which impact performance. All students are enrolled in non-core academic instruction through modules. The students enrolled in the life skills program participate in varying degrees appropriate to their development and capabilities.

In order to require and provide instruction in non-core subject areas, a priority has been to enlist a teacher team to build a schedule that allows for flexibility yet ensures that students will experience routine non-core classes each year. The team has crafted an instructional module rotation that guarantees instructional opportunities across the school. These module groups are heterogeneously grouped in different combinations from their core classes. This approach has promoted students getting to know additional peers throughout their school year.

Art uses visual, artistic, and technological modes of expression with a focus on the elements and principles of art through a project based artist study. Classes are taught four days per week for 50 minutes/day and are presented to all sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in a six week module. The instruction is aligned with Visual Arts standards articulated by the Maine Cohort for Customized Learning (MCCL) and Maine Learning Results (MLRs). Once a student has successfully completed the three modules of the middle school curriculum, they have demonstrated proficiency of the required visual arts standards for the grade span.

Physical education (PE) is also taught in the module rotation. All students in grades six, seven and eight have PE once every three days for half the school year unless they are enrolled in Adapted Physical Education (APE). The other half of the year includes PE once a week. The standards for PE are tied to the MLR and MCCL standards. For example, these standards emphasize physical movement, fitness, games and cooperative play. Physical education classes are 50 minutes in duration throughout the school year. APE is also taught at Reeds Brook to fulfill needs of students who may require specialized instruction.

Health classes are taught separately from physical education for one semester of the school year for all students. The class is offered once every third day in the semester for 50 minutes. The health curriculum is tied to the MLRs and MCCL standards. Instructional emphasis is on healthy habits, drug and alcohol awareness, sexual education and more. The state Maine Drug and Alcohol Youth Survey serves as a barometer of student application of healthy habits. Our favorable results indicate that students seem to be attentive and committed to responsible and healthy practices.

Foreign language is a required class for all students. A special small group program is offered for capable students enrolled in the life skills program. Spanish is the selected language of instruction at Reeds Brook Middle School because of its prevalence across our nation and world. Students receive 50 minutes of instruction every other day for the entire school year. Spanish teachers utilize best practice techniques such

as speaking and listening through cultural immersion. Technology supplements classroom language instruction through the use of DuoLingo for home study. The projection is for students to complete a three year Spanish I program equivalent to that of a high school course.

Guidance, technology and library are each taught separately in a module rotation for half of the school year for all students. Technology and guidance modules are taught in seven-week blocks with four out of five days of instruction, whereas library is taught once every third day for a semester. Each subject has a class period of 50 minutes. MLR's define the standards for each. Guidance instruction focuses on the development of social-emotional habits, career readiness, and peer interactions. Library builds on use of research skills and use of multi-media as well as reading for interest. Technology expands students' classroom use of their iPads and laptops to include apps and programs to support the core subject areas.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

District committees across all disciplines have developed challenging curricula linked to Common Core State Standards and Maine Cohort for Customized Learning (MCCL) standards. Teachers modify and adjust instruction to teach these standards and to meet the needs of a wide variety of student learners. For example, in language arts classrooms, students set individual independent reading goals based on past progress, Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) results and current Lexile reading levels. Also, when literature circles are established in classes during certain units of study, a variety of novels are assigned to students depending on their Lexile levels. Additionally, 25 minute Academic Extensions in the areas of reading and mathematics are provided for students in the areas of most need as indicated by standardized test scores, teacher concerns and current academic standing.

Differentiation is a recognized tool to adapt instruction as needed. In all disciplines, teachers make decisions about grouping based on knowledge of students' abilities. The Section 504 program exists to benefit students who have received a diagnosis (such as ADHD, depression, anxiety, etc.) and who require special accommodations in order to level the educational playing field. In addition, special education teachers provide input for classroom teachers in terms of modifications for meeting the goals of individualized instructional plans (IEPs). Teachers in all disciplines use this information to modify their curriculum by altering assignments, customizing assessments and placing students with special needs in preferential seating in the classroom.

All classroom instruction, with the exception of math classes, are taught to heterogeneous groups to provide for rigorous exposure and optimal learning experiences for all students. For math, students are placed in developmentally appropriate math classes based on NWEA MAP scores and teacher recommendation. Technology-based supplemental instruction is provided in both math and Spanish through the use of iXL and DuoLingo.

Many of the learning experiences that Reeds Brook Middle School students encounter allow them to make connections beyond the classroom and into their own lives and interests. Some of those specific opportunities include an Economic Market Simulation Sale, Greek and Chinese plays, 20th Century history and music in social studies, career exploration, occupation research and service learning projects in guidance and mock trials and debates on current issues in language arts.

By effectively implementing the criteria outlined in both the school's mission statement and its attached beliefs, both the academic and social needs of the students are addressed and met. In addition to the essential physical and emotional needs addressed by the school's mission and beliefs, the desire to instill pride, focus on a healthy environment and the need to provide academic challenges and varied instructional experiences are a major focus of the school's quest to create lifelong learners.

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

The school utilizes a variety of assessment systems as well as formative and summative assessments to best inform curriculum and instruction. Commercially prepared assessments such as Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) testing and Maine Educational Assessment

(MEA) tests are administered as part of district and statewide assessment while formative and summative assessments are used as a part of our standards-based reporting to parents and students. In addition, special education and support services use many prepared tools such as Woodcock Johnson, Basic Reading Inventory and Key Math 3 to assess progress of students with IEPs, to design a student's program or to determine eligibility status.

Data use and analysis occurs in many venues. Special education teachers use testing results to inform both a student's program, accommodations and content for small group instruction. Special education sub-group scores are monitored and the responsive approach in recent years has been to prioritize inclusive programming in regular education with structured study opportunities in the resource room. Professional learning communities (PLCs) regularly use data from NWEA tests and MEA tests to determine differentiation in the classroom, grade level placement into academic extension groups for RtI, for enrichment or for placement into the gifted and talented program. Data teams over the years have provided a focused school-wide plan for data use as well as providing a common school-wide plan for areas of remediation. For example, consistently low scores on constructed response questions led to a rubric that was implemented to increase instruction of these types of questions in all content areas. Similarly, refocusing on reading in the content areas addressed another need evidenced in our test scores.

Teachers from both middle schools in the district also meet regularly to work with assessment results including the subcategories of the NWEA and the reading, writing, science and math scores from MEA state testing to adjust curriculum and to reinforce best practice. Writing data is used regularly to assess instruction. Assessment literacy training has focused quality formative and summative assessment decisions toward determining proficiency as well as improving the use of learning targets to allow for student self-assessment. Development of common assessments strengthens the district and school approach to a guaranteed curriculum for middle school students.

The shift to assessment literacy and a student self-assessment focus has increased the reflection and activism toward demonstration of proficiency. Parent meetings and guides have helped parents to make the transition to a standards-based system along with improved ability to interpret student test scores. Annual parent and teacher conferences are also a time for teachers to review results and goals with parents and students.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

As Reeds Brook Middle School teachers strive to engage and motivate students through many traditional and nontraditional instructional strategies, the educators use a positive learning climate to enhance the rigor of the curriculum. Culminating activities allow for celebration as well as a chance to show proficiency. Examples include writing celebrations for completion of specific genres of writing, mock trials analyzing a novel study of “The Outsiders”, human number lines and coordinate grids to help math students physically visualize concepts, economic simulation activities through apple product sales events, student artwork being displayed throughout the school, band members volunteering to mentor younger students and an Hour of Code event being brought to all students with student leaders serving as “tech support.”

The school institutes and promotes academic responsibility and core values through our Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program. Beyond the classroom walls, sports, drama and after school programs are held to similar expectations for citizenship. Promotion of these values through a unique trading card program, developed upon implementation of PBIS, allows students to earn recognition for showing responsibility, respect, honesty and compassion. Weekly drawings of the trading cards give selected students opportunities to choose prizes. Continued recognition for exhibition of the values culminates in an opportunity for a pizza party with friends. The program has instilled a sense of community pride in student behaviors and an increase in school pride. The principal notes student successes on morning announcements as well as during school-wide recognition assemblies.

School-wide support for our annual Special Olympics team is a highlight of our school culture. The sixth grade students participate as Fans in the Stands each year at the state spring Special Olympics meet. A special school-wide assembly for all Olympians is held in our gym. The support and send off for competitors from Reeds Brook Middle School students is heartwarming and genuine.

Reeds Brook Middle School has the option of a “late bus” which greatly increases the number of students who may stay to access the many teachers who volunteer to give extra tutorial to struggling students, to facilitate accountability for daily work completion, to organize peer club meetings for chess and computers and to offer group volleyball, health, drama and fitness activities. These meetings all happen outside of the school day and are fully supported and staffed by our teachers and staff. For instance, our school nurse and an evening custodian facilitate Fitness Club and Chess Club respectively. Teachers also make use of study halls and their planning periods to access students for makeup work and remediation when necessary.

Reeds Brook Middle School teachers and staff are a supportive group in both a professional and personal sense. They frequently plan activities together such as staff breakfasts, lunches, celebrations and gatherings that makes for a cohesive staff. This positive staff climate exhibits itself in a strong academic climate that allows for collaboration and support in advancing the development of a strong school.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

At Reeds Brook Middle School, communication is a priority. Consistent use of multiple communication portals allows families and community members to access information in an effort to provide updates, allow for input and to solicit feedback. Portals such as Google Classroom and PowerSchool allow parents to be informed of assignments and grades while the online weekly newsletter, The Rebel Report, is available to keep parents informed of school happenings and upcoming events. Updates to the school website and Facebook page keep community members up to date and parents are consistently complimentary of the efforts to keep them apprised of events. In addition, staff contribute articles to the quarterly district newspaper, The LINK 22. The school is especially proud that communication efforts have led to a strong following and an expectation that information will be available and presented in a timely manner to allow parents and community to be aware, involved and supportive.

Reeds Brook Middle School has supported the institution of two boosters programs that engage parents in

active numbers. The Reeds Brook Athletic Boosters Club and the Music Boosters have brought tremendous parent perspective and resources for our students. Volunteer opportunities often present themselves from booster's events and provide parents a comfortable niche in the school.

A significant parent outreach effort has been the implementation of the monthly Reeds Brook Middle School Parent Advisory Group. This group invites parents and interested community members in to discuss, clarify and brainstorm about the middle school. Recent topics have included scheduling, technology management and student transitions to and from middle school. The meetings result in a dialogue that promotes communication and improvements to the school and home partnership.

Each year, events such as 6th Grade Step Up Night, performances of the spring play, music performances and festivals along with 8th Grade Promotion Night to name a few, offer student-centered evenings. These events are very well attended and speak to the level of engagement with the community.

Community partnerships are important to student support and engagement. One such partnership is with the Cole Foundation, a local veterans and World War II memorial museum. Students visit Cole's Museum to interview veterans in a project-based learning setting which offers the older generation in that community a chance to interact with our students. Weekly visits from community members who bring therapy dogs, as well as a partnership with the local Hampden Food Cupboard and the local recycling center, provide opportunities for our life skills students to develop real life skills.

### 3. Professional Development:

Professional development is an integral part of teacher and principal growth at Reeds Brook Middle School. The impact of professional development cannot be understated. Teachers and the principal are motivated to take advantage of offerings and value the pedagogical discussion that professional development allows. The level of school-wide and classroom-based application is evident as teaching practices, curriculum choices and professional discourse represent a strong variety of approaches informed by experiences with other colleagues and professional developers.

The supervision and evaluation model utilized at Reeds Brook Middle School emphasizes the importance of identifying areas for personal educator growth and the seeking of resources to gain knowledge and skill. Some of this development starts very close to the classroom through professional discussion between teachers and with the principal following observations, team meetings and through school committees. District support is provided to allow principals and teachers to access opportunities both locally and state-wide.

In-house professional development is regularly provided by teachers and principals at faculty meetings and during inservice opportunities. Educational technicians have benefited from workshops presented by district specialists. In-district and regional opportunities are well supported by the Penobscot River Educational Partnership, a local consortium of schools. This professional development approach promotes frequent interchange with teachers and administrators in neighboring districts around common initiatives in a low-cost, high yield fashion. The model also prioritizes multiple workshop dates dedicated to the same topic so that attendees can be introduced to aspects of the learning, go back and try the strategies in the classroom and then return to debrief on the experience. Assessment Literacy has been the most recent topic for which Reeds Brook Middle School has sent "train-the-trainer" representatives. This approach has led to a high degree of awareness and implementation of the strategies among attendees.

Teachers and principals are encouraged to participate in conferences, seminars and workshops beyond the district as well. Attendees are asked to return to their schools and share critical knowledge and skills from their experiences. On an annual basis, Reeds Brook Middle School teacher representatives and the principal attend the Maine Literacy Institute and have participated in the Department of Education's Cross Disciplinary Literacy Network. Multiple Reeds Brook Middle School teachers currently serve as teacher leader liaisons for partnerships with Maine Physical Science Partnership and the Department of Education Math Practices. The result of these professional networks includes up to date knowledge of legislation, curriculum or standards updates and research.

#### 4. School Leadership:

Continuous improvement is the goal of effective leadership at Reeds Brook Middle School. In order to maximize support for student achievement, it is critical that leadership be strong and shared. At the helm of the school is the principal, who believes in cultivating school success through clarity of focus and establishment of strong practices and procedures coupled with open and frequent communication. The principal values diverse opinions, cultivates leadership capacity in others and develops a trusting climate; evidence of a servant leadership approach. Several avenues are developed at Reeds Brook Middle School to promote unified work and ever improving results including regular Faculty Council meetings, weekly Student Assistance Team (SAT) meetings, daily grade level teaming efforts, teacher led professional development opportunities and frequent initiative-based teacher leadership opportunities in response to building and district priorities.

The principal supports grade level teacher teaming and committee work to build and implement structures such as regular and flexible intervention groups that maintain a focus on student performance. A teacher led scheduling committee is convened to evaluate and implement the basis for such needs and school-wide input is considered. The result has been a successful mix of priority learning experiences and adequate learning time to result in strong student achievement across curriculum areas. The SAT has put strong accountability standards in place for student work completion, after school tutorial and co-curricular participation in an effort to reach underachieving students.

The collective ability of all staff and students to translate vision into reality is a strength of the Reeds Brook Middle School community. Faculty and students are encouraged to approach the principal and Dean of Students regarding practices and concerns so that needs are met. Open communication practices have resulted in greater clarity, direction and implementation of curriculum, standards and interventions which has led to increased learning and achievement. A leadership philosophy is present that considers social, emotional, and academic needs of adolescence. There is a deep empathy for the adolescent learner which results in both adult anticipation and strong preparedness for the needs of the middle school age group. The principal holds both staff and students to high expectations with a fine balance of being a helpful advocate while establishing clear expectations as the building leader. The school's leadership facilitates the ongoing evaluation and development of school staff and practices, setting clear standards to support each staff member to more effectively create a supportive learning community which challenges all to achieve individual success.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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The mission statement, “Reeds Brook Middle School, a supportive learning community, challenges all students to achieve individual success”, clearly states that providing students with opportunities to achieve success is Reeds Brook Middle School’s most important goal. Academic success is part of the culture at Reeds Brook Middle School and is an expectation shared by parents, the students, the Board of Directors and the supporting communities. Reaching this ambitious goal requires rigorous, high-caliber and engaging learning activities facilitated by a supportive and nurturing team of professionals dedicated to the school’s mission. The Reeds Brook Middle School staff is skilled at recognizing the needs of each student in order to reach the school’s high expectations. When students know that their teachers understand their needs and care about their success, they too are willing to strive for excellence.

The Reeds Brook Middle School staff recognizes that meeting the needs of individual students takes both collaboration and communication. Finding time for teachers to collaborate has historically been a priority in the school’s schedule. Grade level teams meet several times a week for the purpose of examining student progress and planning interventions designed to help students reach or exceed proficiency on the school’s learning standards. Reeds Brook Middle School’s Student Assistance Team (SAT) meets weekly to review data and develop action plans for students who are not experiencing success in one or more aspects of their education. More informally, teachers often meet before and after school to discuss the needs of individual students and much collaboration takes place via email.

Math teams and MathCounts team competition results have been a very visible indicator of the success of our communication and teaming related to math instruction and curriculum. There are typically multiple Reeds Brook Middle Schoolers in the top ten at each math league meet and the overall regional trophy often resides in our school for the year. MathCounts teams have qualified regularly for state competition indicating a high level of achievement.

Communication between and among teachers and with students and parents is essential to student success. Reeds Brook Middle School employs multiple avenues of communication designed to help meet the needs of students. Examples of these methods include Google Classroom to communicate with students, the PowerSchool Portal to communicate information about student performance to students and parents and class websites as further means of communication for families. Email is also an important component of successful communication with parents. All of these methods of communication allow the faculty to pursue strategies for success with each student. Early intervention and communication when a student is not being successful is essential in order to provide an academically rich and supportive community.