

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2017 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    [X] Choice

Name of Principal Ms. Karen Wallace

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

Official School Name Northern Lights ABC K-8 School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2424 East Dowling Road

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

City Anchorage                      State AK                      Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 99507-1972

County \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (907) 742-7500                      Fax (907) 742-7530

Web site/URL http://nlabc.asdk12.org                      E-mail wallace\_karen@asdk12.org

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

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

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Dr. Deena Bishop                      E-mail bishop\_deena@asdk12.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Anchorage School District                      Tel. (907) 742-4000

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.

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

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Ms. Tam Agosti-Gisler  
(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. 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 and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 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.
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 2011 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: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.
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 has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
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.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2016-2017) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

- Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
  - 67 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 14 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 19 High schools
  - 4 K-12 schools

104 TOTAL

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

- 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
- Number of students as of October 1, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
<b>PreK</b>	0	0	0
<b>K</b>	33	33	66
<b>1</b>	33	33	66
<b>2</b>	41	34	75
<b>3</b>	38	39	77
<b>4</b>	34	47	81
<b>5</b>	37	44	81
<b>6</b>	40	38	78
<b>7</b>	31	34	65
<b>8</b>	23	28	51
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	310	330	640

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 3 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 24 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 8 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 45 % White
  - 18 % 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 2015 – 2016 school year: 12%

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, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	63
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	12
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	75
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	639
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.117
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	12

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 11 %  
71 Total number ELL

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

Albanian, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Inupiaq, Korean, Lao, Malayalam, Punjabi, Russian, Samoan, Spanish, Thai, Tongan, Turkish, Yupik

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 18 %  
Total number students who qualify: 118
8. Students receiving special education services: 4 %  
23 Total number of students served

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

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 16
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 including those teaching high school specialty subjects	24
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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 27:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

<b>Required Information</b>	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%	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 2016.

<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 X No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2004

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

Northern Lights ABC parents and staff believe education should provide children the skills necessary to live successfully, contribute to their communities and be responsible citizens.

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

Northern Lights ABC, as part of the Anchorage School District, uses a lottery system to provide an equal opportunity for students who request participation in an alternative program or school for which the number of applications exceed the number of available openings.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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Northern Lights - Anchorage Basic Curriculum (NLABC), founded in 1978 as an alternative education program, is an ethnically diverse community whose students come from locations across the nearly 100 square miles of the Anchorage Bowl. NLABC has embraced a back-to-basics approach to education for 40 years. This approach provides students with the skills necessary to live successfully and contribute to their communities while becoming responsible citizens. Character building is embedded throughout the K-8th grade curriculum. These successful philosophies and educational strategies have consistently drawn families to the school as is evident from the 121 students wait-listed for kindergarten in 2017.

Dedication to the school philosophy and developmental strategies is shown in myriad ways. Families must secure personal transportation to and from school and establish personal ties within a diverse student populace that is spread across a wide geographical area. Minority students comprise over 50% of the population, however numerous events throughout the year bring the community together and provide avenues to bridge cultural and economic barriers while bringing students together from many Anchorage neighborhoods.

Key strategies and goals within NLABC concentrate on five major developmental areas: intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and ethical. Mastery of basic skills in all academic areas is paramount to success. Phonics, math, reading, spelling, and penmanship skills are developed early through direct and sequential teaching. Teachers utilize math fact drills to solidify addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division skills. As students master each skill, they are recognized by their peers and progress to the next skill. Students are challenged to excel by observing their growth and progress. Several other programs are provided to enhance understanding: students arrive early to learn or assist others in learning math skills, are tutored on reading skills during recess, and those who need additional time to accomplish tasks are given supported work time.

NLABC's educational foundation includes motivation to attain high levels of physical fitness. SQORD, a fitness program initiative to increase activity through an interactive computer-based program, provides incentives for increasing activity levels. Staff and parents worked together to establish an intramural cross-country running team that promotes lifetime fitness. NLABC students have been the highest participating school in the Anchorage Heart Run, raising over \$20,000 for our community in the past four years.

These activities promote physical fitness as well as establish and strengthen socio-emotional development. As students work successfully, both as a team and individually to fulfill responsibilities established within academic and fitness programs, they become more confident in the skills they possess. Added to this, they learn to help others, achieve a goal, and earn both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. NLABC students lead community-minded initiatives such as "Souls for Soles" (collecting shoes), canned food drives, collect money to purchase toys for hospitalized children, and donate to local charities. Additionally, students and families engage in fundraisers such as a "Skate-a-Thon" or "Read-a-Thon" to support traditional class field trips; and enjoy participating in age-appropriate events together throughout the school year. Within these realms, respect, courtesy and kindness are modeled, practiced, displayed, and valued.

While core tenets to NLABC hold that teaching ethical behavior and morality are primarily the responsibility of parents, 18 character building blocks are embedded within our curriculum; core among them are honesty, good citizenship, responsibility, patriotism, loyalty, and compassion for others. NLABC students engage in studies, presentations, and performances which promote knowledge of the ideals upon which our nation was founded and patriotism. Students and staff demonstrate respect towards each other and themselves; this mutually respectful environment encourages acceptance of differences and bridges cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic barriers.

Key components to success include traditions that challenge students to work together and provide opportunities to recognize the cultural diversity of the school. Red, White, and Blue performances are examples of teamwork where 1st-5th grade students present historically based performances for the student

body and family members. Fifth grade students are selected, based on self-discipline and work ethic, to perform in music ensembles. Reading at all levels is encouraged and rewarded through the school's TIGER Reading Program. Battle of the Books helps students learn key concepts of teamwork and perseverance as well as sportsmanship. Our Multi-Cultural Day provides ample opportunity for cross-cultural pride and learning as students perform dances and showcase traditional regalia from the cultures they represent.

The back-to-basics approach to education and the goals of NLABC have not changed throughout its 40 years. Recognition as a National Blue Ribbon School in 2004 has strengthened our goal to equip each student to be a responsible and, contributing member of a global society. Standards have remained high, and many new events and programs have been initiated by dedicated staff and parents to ensure that our curriculum and instructional strategies remain true to our philosophy and relevant as they encompass 21st Century Standards and Skills.



## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum:**

The goal of Northern Lights' back-to-basics philosophy is to build a solid academic foundation in the primary grades so that content instruction predominates in the intermediate and middle school grades. With the input of a parent advisory board, the staff has chosen the following curriculum that allows students to achieve utmost learning through conscientious and sequential, spiraled teaching, thereby building a solid academic foundation. A scope and sequence is set for all grades, giving a unified approach to all major subjects. Textbooks and supplemental materials are chosen that support high goals in each area of the curriculum.

Beginning in kindergarten, students quickly master letter/sound connections and grade level phonograms that promote better spelling and reading. They spend time daily with bag books - leveled books that continuously advance skills. Reading instruction begins with students working in grade-level literature anthologies and leveled practice materials, with more complex concepts being taught through class sets of trade books. Through literature in a wide variety of genres, students gain a deeper knowledge of story elements and characterization, and character education is naturally incorporated into discussions. Students are strongly engaged in the Tiger Reading Club, tracking pages to reach the annual K-6th goal of 5 million pages. The extensive time spent reading free-choice fiction, nonfiction, and graphic novels clearly impacts reading achievement.

Language arts are taught through the use of both the Six Traits writing program and grammar-based texts starting in grade one. Beginning in fourth grade and continuing through our middle school program, students are introduced to the parts of speech and sentence diagramming. These practices promote an understanding of the elements of writing, while the art of writing is taught through a variety of genres from poetry to nonfiction. Continuous practice across the curriculum writing in response to favorite stories, art, and specific informational prompts, and learning organization and focus through the building-wide practice of QAF (question-answer-format), means that students are comfortable and capable of outstanding creative and informational writing. Among other projects, 7th graders compete and are published annually in a national poetry contest, 5th graders study, define, and apply the Bill of Rights to current events and personal beliefs, and 6th graders published novels via iBooks this year.

The Saxon math program is the primary K-6th grade math curriculum, and begins in kindergarten with the introduction of numbers and number sense, and develops sequentially toward middle school students solving pre-algebra and algebraic problems. Students complete advanced math classes, moving directly into a higher-level class in high school. The Saxon method of instruction is district and state standards-based and spiraled, introducing basic concepts which continue to advance while reinforcing previously learned concepts to mastery level. Hands-on manipulatives enable the students to develop mathematical proficiency by allowing the use of concrete objects to observe, model, and internalize abstract concepts. The school reinforces the computation components with a regular use of math fact drills, helping students to master math facts.

Social Studies are taught using the district-adopted, primary document-based textbooks in conjunction with primary documents that promote critical thinking skills. As a Gilder-Lehrman affiliate school, teachers utilize the vast resources that reinforce the curriculum. Locally adopted curriculum allows lower grades to learn about their city, state, and country. Civic education lessons are taught and students in fourth through eighth grade have participated in the last two elections through Youth Vote to better understand the voting process and the rights of all citizens.

Health and science are taught through a combination of textbooks and hands-on activities; for example, science kits are NGSS aligned and investigate earth, health, and natural sciences. Students are encouraged to focus on STEM activities offered at our school, such as robotics, Science Olympiad, and other science and math-based extra curricular activities.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Students in 7th and 8th grade select either German or Spanish as one elective, attending class daily. Foreign languages are taught using a variety of strategies, starting with print, digital, and audio texts, and expanding to children's stories and tours of the zoo or nature center in the foreign language. Students are actively engaged in learning to speak and read the language of their choice. Middle school students engage the younger students by teaching lessons to the entire class or performing short skits.

Art is taught by a certified art teacher-specialist as well as in the classroom. The art teacher collaborates with specialists and classroom teachers to support the curriculum. Students K-8 receive instruction, with the projects and concepts developing through consecutive, district-adopted standards in the elements of art including drawing, painting, textiles, pottery, and sculpture. Student work is displayed throughout the building and the district. Additionally, students' works are entered in local competitions, with winners displayed publicly and recognized in our building and district.

Students K-5 attend music class with a certified teacher-specialist providing standards-based instruction. 6th-8th graders choose between band, choir, or orchestra, attending class with certified specialists 3 periods a week. Elementary students learn how to play several percussion instruments, the ukulele, and recorders in addition to singing and dance. After-school choir is open to all and quarterly after-school percussion classes are open to 5th-6th graders who practice on grant-funded instruments. The music teachers and music are an integral part of performances at NLABC, with Choir, Percussion Band, Band, Orchestra, and M.S. Choir groups performing regularly at school and with larger school groups in Anchorage. Additionally, the music teacher collaborates with K-5th grade levels to produce the historically based musicals, plays, and other performances that are the basis for Red, White, and Blue Assemblies.

Physical education K-8 promotes not only an awareness of making healthy choices in lives, but teaches students about sportsmanship, skill development, and self confidence, reinforcing our 18 character building blocks. Our program helps students of all grade levels improve their health and understand the importance of staying physically active. School-wide, students have participated in using the SQORD program, which monitors students' activity and can easily be synced with the SQORD application on student wristbands. Students are engaged in monitoring their progress and encouraged to stay active outside of the school day. NLABC students participate in a wide variety of extracurricular activities including running club, badminton, volleyball, basketball, and 7th and 8th grade intramural cross country running.

Access to technology tools and instruction has increased dramatically at NLABC in the last five years. Teachers bring classes to the grant-funded iMac computer-lab weekly, and additional time is available as needed for practice and special projects. Additionally, each grade level group (3 classes) shares a mobile cart of Chromebooks, which provides access to the Internet for research, remediation, and use of the district-sheltered Google Applications for Education (GAFE). NLABC teachers use the GAFE G-Suite to organize assignments that provide each student with audio, video, and document-based assignments, as well as AV options for individualized remediation and enrichment. In the 7th and 8th grade classes, NLABC PTA funded Chromecarts let our students be 1:1 with devices. M.S. students rely heavily on Chromebooks for collaboration, production, research, remediation, and enrichment. Together these technological tools allow teachers to fully utilize a host of resources for instruction that meet diverse student learning styles.

NLABC K-6th grade students visit the library weekly. The certified library-media specialist's instruction follows district standards for reading, informational, and digital literacy, and includes cross-curriculum collaborative instruction with classroom teachers. Early grades focus closely on inquiry and creating a love of literature while meeting American Association of School Librarians and English Language Arts Common Core standards and beginning Internet safety instruction guidelines. Older elementary class instruction is technologically rich, with district standards-based instruction covering strategies for searching, selecting, evaluating, and using information and citing sources as well as expanded Internet safety instruction. M.S. classes visit the library as needed, and the librarian offers a M.S. elective each quarter. In addition to scheduled classes, the library is open so that students can select books and get help as needed with finding and downloading digital books and resources.

### **3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:**

Instruction at Northern Lights begins with the whole group, allowing teachers to provide explicit instruction for understanding new concepts, minimize time spent on lecture and directions, and allow all students equal access to content. During whole group instruction, teachers monitor student participation, ensuring that all students remain engaged. Several concepts embedded within the NLABC philosophy of instruction and learning are of key importance to success. First, whole group instruction allows for quickly paced direct instruction. Teachers observe the class to see how individuals are assimilating the concepts, adjusting pacing and upcoming instruction to meet student needs. One understanding that is key for successful learning is that students have both a right and a responsibility to learn. Whether learning in a group or individually, members of the class actively engage in learning themselves and in supporting the learning of others. Students and families make a commitment to prioritizing learning, and behavioral disruptions are infrequent. This means that following the first portion of the lesson, teachers can work with small groups and individuals who need progress monitoring, remediation, or assessment before moving on academically. Meanwhile, students and groups who are not directly working with the teacher continue to learn rather than waiting for their “turn” to learn or disrupting the class. Whole group instruction has resulted in engaged learners with higher levels of achievement throughout the school. Students learn from and support others in the learning process, while developing socio-emotional skills through positive peer interaction. Students who need specialized instruction receive, both through small group and assisted, differentiated learning, the skills needed to be successful while meeting their individualized educational plan (IEP) and participate with their grade-level peers in classroom discussions.

Northern Lights ABC views student learning as an ongoing and collaborative process that must be based on clear and meaningful assessments. The school uses a variety of student assessment data to evaluate student academic performance and achievement and align and reinforce curriculum choices to meet student needs. Students are continuously progress monitored through assessments beginning with Spalding Phonics in kindergarten, AimsWeb reading and math in all grades, Gates-McGinity in intermediate grades, and all unit assessments across the curriculum frequently check for comprehension and proficiency K-8. Students are assessed annually with state and district-selected standardized testing, and staff members analyze data to formulate instruction centered on specific skills that need to be taught or reinforced. Progress monitoring tracks how much progress each student makes during the school year and guides formulation of strategies for enrichment or remediation. As needed, students are provided with additional remediation and interventions including digital applications such as Lexia and Math Whizz. Lessons are taught with fidelity to ensure that learning needs are met and all students master the concepts.

As a school that is considered high performing, teachers are maintaining a level of achievement for our students by several methods. Staff and grade level meetings are held to analyze student data, the standards in place, curriculum alignment, and discuss current studies and strategies for student success. Staff members communicate with parents about curriculum and expectations, and establish programs to help our students achieve, such as Math and Science Clubs, which are held before and after school to support students and increase achievement. Lessons are taught with fidelity, using all modalities to help each student be successful not only academically, but as a whole child.

As reported by the Alaska Department of Education, NLABC is recognized as a high-performing school among similar schools in the achievement of Alaska Native/American Indian students, economically disadvantaged students, and English learners. The school ranked second among similar schools in the achievement of students with disabilities. NLABC is in the top 15th percentile among all students and in the top 40th percentile in disadvantaged subgroups in meeting standards on the most recent statewide assessment, as compared to similar schools assessing the same grade levels. Disadvantaged subgroups include Alaska Native/American Indian, economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

NLABC staff engage and motivate students toward academic and behavioral success in a variety of ways. Beginning in kindergarten, students are recognized and rewarded for academic achievements, deportment, and in curricular and extracurricular areas including art, music/choir/band/orchestra, PE, Health, and Tiger Reading at assemblies, in newsletter articles, and on our school website and Facebook page. As students mature academically and socially, rewards trend toward the intrinsic, such as membership in the National Junior Honor Society, and the privilege of modeling and mentoring younger students as teachers' aides or as a "buddy class" in which each older student is empowered to help a younger student.

In addition to recognition and awards, students are engaged and motivated by instruction across modalities. Many hands-on and manipulative-based learning opportunities are incorporated into regular instruction. For example, students learn about and follow the scientific method to create a project as part of our school-wide Science Fair leading to the state science fair. Diverse instructional strategies also include the use of technological tools on a frequent basis; students are both engaged and motivated by the opportunity to learn individually and collaboratively using school provided and their own devices.

Northern Lights provides an environment that supports students' academic, social, and emotional growth. Consistently high expectations and a focus on the Character Building Blocks beginning in kindergarten ensure that instructional and learning time are focused within a positive environment of mutual respect and courtesy. Staff and students model courtesy and respect, creating positive growth with little class time spent on corrective discipline. A structure of tiered responsibility / rewards contributes to the climate and by 7th-8th grade, students are able to organize and manage community-oriented fundraisers such as canned food drives for local shelters. These projects show the value of helping others, and promote citizenship with a focus on character building blocks of generosity and compassion. In addition to increased academic responsibility, students enjoy increased opportunities for social interaction as they grow, including 6th grade camp and M.S. dances.

Our instructional climate in turn creates an atmosphere where teachers feel valued and supported. Grade level and interest-based teams support professional growth. An induction liaison works with new teachers to provide support and encouragement. Instructional time is valued, and interruptions are kept to a minimum. Teachers are invited to share in school leadership, where ideas and concerns are recognized and implemented in long-term planning.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Northern Lights staff partners with parents to educate students. In the lottery application process, families are invited to tour NLABC with current parents and staff who answer questions and explain our vision, mission, curriculum, and procedures so parents can make an informed choice to apply. New families are welcomed, and parents are invited to serve on the Advisory Board (philosophy/curriculum) and/or a traditional Parent Teacher Association (PTA) (activities/fundraising) and to volunteer in the school and/or at home. Though most parents work outside the home, NLABC staff reach out to engage and involve them personally through traditional and nontraditional methods including email, digital newsletters, Facebook, "SignUp" for in-school and alternative volunteerism, text, and of course through conversations and conferences. Through these means, parents are informed and involved in the educational plan and very importantly for success, actively support student learning at home. Academic grades are continuously available through our digital grade book, and students receive an additional deportment card based on learning behaviors and citizenship. Teachers continuously communicate to share news of success or plan and implement strategies for remediation or intervention. That these strategies are successful is clearly evident in the support at home for academics and the engagement of parents as partners throughout the learning process.

Families participate in and lead many educational and team-building activities in our school, including

TIGER Reading, STEM Nights, Science Fair, Fall Carnival, and Field Day. Each of these activities is designed to help our students gain the skills necessary to be a healthy, happy, and productive member of our community. An annual event at our school is the historically based pre-Thanksgiving Feast. Families and school business partners (SBPs) assist with volunteers and funding, M.S. students help serve, and parents manage and organize performances. First-6th graders study historical figures, then dress and speak in character.

NLABC partners with the community in activities like the Heart Run, with organizations like the Eagle River Nature Center, and with businesses and SBPs in one-time and long running relationships. Our SBP with Junior Achievement annually provides curriculum and volunteer instructors for JA in a Day. Many SBPs serve as leaders, and others provide volunteers, discounted supplies and services, and even materials like tri-fold science fair boards. Community support is as diverse as our student body.

NLABC staff partner with families, businesses and the community to enrich our educational resources and increase learning opportunities.

### **3. Professional Development:**

Each fall before school begins, our staff meets to evaluate student progress. From this, we formulate a plan for ensuring that all our students' academic needs are met during the upcoming year. This meeting also serves as an opportunity to share strategies learned from recent trainings and experience, ensure consistency across grade levels, and work together so each member of our staff is supported. This initial meeting is often the catalyst to spur additional training, and staff members work with peer cohorts in our building and the district to learn and apply strategies throughout the year.

In recent years, site-based professional development included Spalding Phonics for primary teachers, a semester-long staff and ABC Parent Advisory Board refresher on the NLABC founder's vision of our school, math and reading interventions training, and G-Suite and other needs-based technology trainings. These classes relate directly to classroom instruction. Our staff has found by participating in on-site classes directly related to the curriculum of our school, it is easy to take new knowledge and strategies and consistently apply it in classrooms across all grade levels. Site-based trainings encourage a collegial approach to instruction as well as immediate and supportive debriefing.

As part of a large urban school district, we are fortunate to have access to district as well as site-based and teacher expert training throughout the entire year. Staff members choose to participate in a wide range of professional development from music and art to technology and core curriculum. Classes are selected by teachers to meet classroom instructional needs and interests. The information and strategies learned are shared with grade-level partners as well as other staff and applied directly in the classroom.

To encourage recognition of the diverse and unique cultural differences across NLABC and our district, staff participated in the district's cultural awareness sensitivity training. Classroom teachers and specialists meet regularly across district, by grade level, and in peer cohorts to fine tune strategies for instruction in curriculum areas. By meeting with other teachers across the district and within our school, we are able to learn, try, and successfully implement exemplary instructional strategies within our classrooms and throughout the NLABC community.

### **4. School Leadership:**

NLABC has 640 K-8th grade students enrolled, 39 full-time and almost 20 part-time staff, one full-time teacher who serves as teacher-in-charge on rare occasions, and one principal. This is unusual in our district, with schools of our size usually having a full-time vice-principal on staff. Our building is academically successful without additional administrators because of the strong character-building program taught throughout the grades.

Our principal believes that we can all work together to set goals and construct strategies to meet them. She believes strongly in the partnership of administration, school staff, parents, and students in creating a

positive and successful educational environment. As a result, our ABC Parent Advisory Board is strongly engaged and has a significant impact on curriculum selection within district guidelines as well as on school activities. In recent years the parent advisory board has successfully advocated for an M.S. intramural cross-country running team, supported acquisition of technology, updated our health curriculum, and increased requirements for grade level participation in the science fair. Members of this board work closely with our staff and principal, and connect individually with new-to-building families as mentors. The PTA is equally actively engaged in the many activities that make our school a fun place to be as well as enriching and supporting classroom academics. The PTA supports many school programs including the voluntary Tiger Reading program, Fall Carnival, Field Day, STEM Night activities, 6th Grade Camp, and many more. Their hard work and devotion to providing a rich learning environment for every student goes far above paying for membership and includes the laptops that gave our M.S. students 1:1 capability, an iMac lab, enrichment funds for each classroom, instruments for a percussion choir, funding for Battle of the Books materials, a rich diversity of supplies for art, and new PE and playground equipment. Additionally, families are actively involved in all areas of our school, and frequently volunteer both within and outside our school. The NLABC Student Advisory Board works directly with our principal, attending meetings with other secondary school representatives, working as liaisons between our student bodies, and advocating for academics and activities across our school and district.

Our principal believes in an open door policy, offering everyone a seat at the decision-making table. As a result, our community can work together to provide exemplary opportunities for our students in both the academic and social realms.

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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Northern Lights established 18 character building blocks that set a strong academic and behavioral foundation for staff and students. The components of the building blocks establish the framework for academic goals and socio-emotional success. These building blocks are carefully scaffolded with classroom instruction, modeling, practice opportunities, feedback, and remediation beginning with the youngest students. Standards are consistent and clearly defined, as are expectations for interpersonal interactions. Self-discipline and a strong work ethic are paramount to success as students progress through grade levels to attain the highest achievements at district, state, and national levels. Former NLABC students attribute their continued academic achievements and citizenship to the educational foundation and principles established at NLABC. The strength of the program is especially noted as former students' children attend NLABC, and are taught by former students who are now teachers. Guest instructors and speakers compliment the outstanding participation, cooperation, learning, and courtesy displayed by students throughout the school. Visitors comment that students greet them politely, hold doors open, and travel purposefully and quietly through the halls.

Because of the foundational character building, there is a culture of respect and responsibility that leads to high academic success. It is possible to maintain a higher grading scale, with 94-100% equating to "A" work. Students are recognized on the honor roll board for their academic achievements and at assemblies. Middle school teachers recognize achievement with honor roll and induction into the National Junior Honor Society. In addition to the higher grading scale, NLABC maintains a second report card for deportment and commends students who are courteous, practice self-control, respect authority, respect the rights of others, follow school rules, accept responsibility and accept constructive criticism.

The commitment each family makes when choosing to attend this school is paramount to reaching the high expectations put forth by the founders of educating our children with the skills necessary to live successfully, contribute to the community, and be responsible citizens. The current Alaska School Index Performance (ASIP) rating of 98.27% and consistently high standardized state assessment scores is proof of success and cohesive work between students, staff, and families.