

**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) [X] Title I    [X] Charter    [ ] Magnet    [X] Choice

Name of Principal Mr. Curtis Peterson

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

Official School Name The Caring & Sharing Learning School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1951 S.E. 4th Street

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

City Gainesville                      State FL                      Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 32641-8718

County Alachua County

Telephone (352) 372-1004                      Fax (352) 372-0894

Web site/URL http://www.caringandsharingschool.com/index.html    E-mail petersonc@gm.sbac.edu

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\*Ms. Karen Clarke                      E-mail clarkekd@gm.sbac.edu  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Alachua School District                      Tel. (352) 955-7300

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. Charlie Jackson  
(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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 31 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 12 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 7 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 50 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, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	7	13	20
K	12	14	26
1	13	14	27
2	7	11	18
3	15	15	30
4	5	12	17
5	8	12	20
6	6	7	13
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	73	98	171

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 100 % Black or African American
  - 0 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 0 % 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 2015 – 2016 school year: 15%

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, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	13
(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)]	25
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	165
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.152
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	15

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 100 %  
Total number students who qualify: 171

8. Students receiving special education services: 5 %  
9 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
- 0 Other Health Impaired
- 1 Specific Learning Disability
- 5 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 8
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	9
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
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 19:1
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	94%	99%	99%	99%	99%
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    No X

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.

We will provide the best academic and personal education for students in an environment which promotes achievement and excellence as our students contribute to society.

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

Caring and Sharing Learning School (CSLS) prides itself on the enrollment process. Interested parents meet with the principal to discuss how the family, school and community can work together to improve the educational process of the prospective student. 100% of the students on campus have at least one staff member on campus that knows a member of their family personally.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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Caring and Sharing Learning School (CSLS) is a public charter school located in Gainesville, Florida and the Alachua County School District. The Alachua County School District has an enrollment of approximately 27,000 students. The school was founded in 1998 by Dr. Simon Johnson, a retired University of Florida -College of Education professor and Verna Johnson, a retired elementary educator in Alachua County.

CSLS's purpose is to provide the best academic and personal education for our 171 students in an environment which promotes achievement, personal excellence and a sense of pride. Students leave CSLS and become community leaders in the global society. Students excel academically and socially because our mission and vision are placed into practice daily and are relevant to the needs of our students. As CSLS approaches its 20th anniversary, the school has earned the well-deserved reputation of maximizing opportunities for student success by being a beacon for the families we serve, the inclusion of the stakeholder community in the daily activities of the school, and the effective utilization of community resources.

CSLS has continuously increased State assessment scores and has exited the State list of the lowest 100 and 300 schools in Reading. In addition, the school is the only school in Alachua County history to exit the "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) schools in need of improvement category. In 2010, the school had the state's highest percentage increase of Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT) scores and in 2015 the state's highest percentage increase on Florida State Assessment (FSA) score in Reading.

The school is located across the street from the largest public housing complex in Gainesville. The income level of the area is the lowest in the city with a median family income of \$24,994. Stakeholders operate from the premise that students can learn in spite of their economic circumstances, especially if certain elements are incorporated in the implementation of the educational program.

As a VPK - 6th grade school, a common thread prevalent in all grade levels is high expectations. Consequently, as part of the implementation process, much effort is placed on educating the whole child. As we educate students, the instructional approach is based on the needs of students and is modified when needed. In utilizing this approach, student learning becomes meaningful and positive which increases student engagement and learning. Using Cooperative Learning strategies and Webb's Depth of Knowledge enhances student learning by allowing them to function academically beyond the simple recall level. The utilization of these strategies takes learning to a higher level. These instructional approaches may explain to some degree why 85% of the 2015 6th grade students who matriculated from the school qualified for an academic magnet or advanced studies middle school program in the Alachua County School District.

Academic milestones are made possible through the collaboration of parental involvement and contributions from civic organizations and community groups such as the United Way and the University of Florida National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (UF NAACP). Collegiate academic groups such as the UF Levin College of Law students, College of Chemistry and Biomedical Sciences students as well as Food Science and Human Nutrition students, are viable to our ongoing classroom volunteer program.

CSLS strongly believes that parental involvement is extremely important to student success and provides an accepting atmosphere where parents feel they are an integral part of the school's success by actively participating in an array of school activities. An interactive technological network which enhances communication and parental involvement through text or web messages allows immediate communication between the school and home. The staff encourages parents to visit the school at any time, as well as volunteer in the school to support the school's mission and vision. Parental meetings are regularly scheduled throughout the school year to discuss student progress and cooperatively plan ways to strengthen student academic success. Specifically, these parent meetings assist the school in setting high expectations of students to create a positive and supportive environment for learning and cooperatively monitoring student progress. These activities foster greater parental participation in the student's academic pursuits.

To maximize learning opportunities, students enroll in an enrichment program. Enrichment takes place after

the regular school day and allows students to engage in challenging activities. These include Science and Math Clubs, Performing Arts and Percussion, Girl Scouts, Sports and Book Club. To fully engage students in the educational process, the school provides opportunities for students to participate in Saturday School to focus on strengthening the academic needs of students in the core areas of Reading, Writing, Science and Math. A variety of learning modalities (including technology) are used to motivate students.

During the summer, CSLS avails to all students in Alachua County an opportunity to participate in the Summer Enrichment Program. Community stakeholders strongly support the mission and vision of the school which results in high student participation for the Enrichment Programs throughout the year.

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

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

CSLS's curriculum is deeply embedded and aligned to the Florida State Standards. The implementation of the research-based curriculum provides avenues for each student to maximize learning opportunities, develop life skills, critical thinking skills, and use these skills in their daily activities beyond the classroom setting. Curriculum implementations are data-driven based on pre- and post-assessment results as a guide for developing student learning activities. The learning activities are diverse in nature to accommodate various learning modalities of students.

Scott Foresman “Reading Street” is a comprehensive language arts program that provides systematic instruction and diagnostic support in phonemic awareness, phonics and decoding, spelling, vocabulary, comprehension skills, writing skills and strategies as well as listening/speaking skills and strategies. Foundational reading skills are reinforced in grades K-3 with Lessons for Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Spelling. Primary teachers follow a district-provided foundational skills instructional sequence, which includes word work, high frequency words, phonics instruction with connected text and dictation. Teacher-created close reading lessons utilizing fictional and informational text develop student comprehension skills. Through classroom lessons that include precise text based questioning and discourse, students are taught to support their reasoning and understanding with textual evidence.

Each student receives a minimum of 90 minutes in Language Arts class daily. Students spend additional time working on Achieve3000 or Smarty Ants - computer-based differentiated reading programs- designed to improve the reading level of students by focusing on specific reading skills such as comprehension.

CSLS firmly believes in applying research skills obtained in Reading and Language Arts to real life experiences. For example, the 6th grade class spends a working lunch with the principal each day. During the lunch, they research the civil rights era, write essays and have daily discussions on the impact it has had on the world. The yearlong process culminates in a 3-day trip to Atlanta, Georgia to tour the city's many civil rights exhibits.

McGraw-Hill “My Math” provides the rigor, personalization, and engagement our students need to be successful with the Florida State Standards. This re-imagined approach to elementary math is fully aligned with the Common Core State Standards and mathematical practices. Students not only receive Mathematics instruction daily through the regular Mathematics program but extend their exposure to mathematics concepts and skills in the After-school enrichment program. Differentiated instruction is offered by varying methods and frequently offering relevant lab activities. These are standard features in the implementation of the mathematics process. Progress monitoring occurs frequently to insure appropriate action is taken to maximize student achievement. In Mathematics, a strong emphasis is placed on problem solving. Mathematical skills are integrated when feasible throughout other areas such as Music, Art and Physical Education. In addition, students are in the computer lab twice a week for 45 minutes to complete their mastery of each Florida Standard skill.

The students at CSLS enjoy the Florida Big Ideas National Geographic text book as their primary textbook and curriculum. The teacher provides many opportunities for students to actively participate in scientific investigations and lab activities. Areas of focus include observing, asking questions, sequencing, measuring, classifying, comparing, inferring, recording information and using materials safely. CSLS utilizes a variety of community resources in implementing the science curriculum. These resources include the Cade Museum for Creativity and Invention and the Cultural Arts Coalition (their lab programs provide a variety of hands on science activities). Students in all grades participate in these extended science activities which assist in making science relevant to them. The focus of the science curriculum is Earth, Space and Life Science.

Civics and social studies lessons are designed to prepare students to become responsible and productive citizens. Teachers develop units of study that focus on concepts relevant to all students across all cultures. The “Florida Studies Weekly” newspaper publication is a unique way for students to engage in the State standards at Caring and Sharing Learning School. Additional bonus time allows for the first 15 minutes of

each school day to focus on civics and its impact on the student's individual liberties. The impacts are brought to life as we celebrate Constitution Day, monitor local elections and host mock school elections. Recent guest presenters have included a State Senator, Keith Perry, the local mayor, City Commission members, County Commission members and the newly elected Supervisor of Elections. CSLS' proximity to historic locations provide the 4th grade an opportunity to complete a unit on Spain and its influence on Florida. Each year, the 4th grade students research Saint Augustine, complete a project in the classroom and take a field trip to Flagler County to tour the "First City", Castillo de San Marcos National Historic Site and Fort Mose State Park.

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten at CSLS gives children a jump start by preparing them for school and enhancing their reading, math, language, science and social skills. CSLS has demonstrated that by developing the skills children need to become strong readers and students at an early age, children are more likely to be successful in school. The school offers a high-quality program implemented by a teacher with a B.S. degree in Elementary Education. CSLS uses the Scholastic Big Day curriculum and a curriculum designed by the school that focuses on exposing the students to the Kindergarten skills set by the State of Florida. The school continually soars to the top in the district for the Florida Kindergarten Readiness screening each year.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Music and Arts education at CSLS plays an integral part in the total development of students in VPK through 6th grade. Through this curriculum, students enhance their mathematical, language arts, reading and social studies skills using the concepts that are taught in the Music class during the school day and the performing arts enrichment program.

In Music, the students are engaged in hands on activities including but not limited to singing, piano techniques, violin lessons, movement and the Carl Orff methods of learning. During the year, the students perform at school and for special occasions throughout the community. This enables students to transfer academic skills by being involved in real world experiences through music and the arts.

The After-school Arts Program provides a seamless transition from the traditional school day music program. After school, skills are expanded in all areas of the arts such as visual arts, drama, dance, world music drumming, music appreciation and performance. Students have received recognition for visual arts displays at the Doris Barton Community Culture Center, the City of Gainesville and the Santa Fe Downtown Spring Arts Festival. Through collaborations with the Star Center Children's Theatre, CSLS received a grant from the Walt Disney Company to perform "The Lion King Jr." stage play. CSLS performed "The Lion King Jr." for 800 public school students and the Alachua County community. In addition, CSLS has participated in theatric productions of "The Little Mermaid" and "Ruby Bridges," - the historical account of the six-year old African-American girl who integrated Louisiana's public schools.

Physical Education concentrates on Movement Competency, Cognitive Abilities, Lifetime Fitness, Responsible Behaviors and Values on a daily basis. In developing appropriate activities to adequately help students in physical education skills and provide support for acquisition of academic skills, frequent joint meetings are held amongst classroom teachers and the physical education teacher. Through collaborative effort, specific strategies are planned and implemented to enhance student obtainment in the traditional academic arena and physical education. A unique component of the physical education instruction pertains to community involvement. Through community involvement activities, students develop a greater appreciation for pursuing a healthy lifestyle while supporting worthy causes. A few of the community involvement activities include. A few community involvement activities CSLS students participate in include Pasta for Pennies (Leukemia & Lymphoma Society), Jump Rope for Heart Health (American Heart Association), Walk-a-thon (Life South Blood Bank of Gainesville), East Gainesville Relay for Life (American Cancer Society).

Thanks to a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), CSLS has linked proper nutrition to physical education. CSLS students have participated in the USDA's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program for the past 4 years. This program provides each student with a mid-afternoon fresh fruit or vegetable snack, which encourages students to make nutritious food a regular part of their diet. In addition,

students research and put together presentations on the food items offered. Students are encouraged to discuss items at home with family members. The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) avails resources to the school which help students become knowledgeable of the importance of incorporating appropriate nutrition in their daily diet. The school's Vegetable Garden is the result of a collaboration between science and physical education. From the science perspective, students learn about plant parts and functions as well as photosynthesis. From the P.E. perspective, students learn about healthy eating habits and nutrition.

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

CSLS teachers and staff employ several teaching methods in the implementation of the instructional program. Outside of the traditional school day, instructional approaches and interventions are implemented through bonus sessions on campus. All students have access to Saturday Enrichment Days, before and after-school tutoring and enrichment hour as well as the annual Summer Enrichment Program. However, before students become engaged with instructional activities, a pre-assessment is administered for baseline data. Based on the results of the pre-assessment, teachers plan appropriate classroom activities and assign cooperative groups. The pre-assessments provide teachers with information as to which students will experience the greatest difficulties, what instructional activities will meet the needs of those students who demonstrate such an academic deficit, classroom grouping patterns, appropriate quest activities for those students who are excelling, and the necessary resources to maximize learning outcomes. Intertwined within the instruction unit are formative assessments which enable the teacher to continually identify students' strengths and their areas to improve. Recognizing that students have varying degrees of expertise and experience, frequent assessments serve as a guide to differentiate instructional activities which will meet the needs of students in the classroom. Small group structures within the classroom play a significant role in maximizing student achievement. Small cooperative groups allow students to collaborate with their peers, engage in meaningful academic discussions as well as allow students to add their perspectives to an issue based on their cultural differences. Thus, gaining acceptance of new cultures and views. In the implementation of the instruction, problem solving, Kagan strategies and Webb's Depth of Knowledge are used extensively. Finally, the post-assessment is a very important part of the instructional process. Not only does it serve as an instrument to evaluate student progress, it becomes a critical piece in planning activities to re-teach those objectives students have yet to master. Each student in grades Kindergarten through Sixth are given the Alachua Instructional Management System (AIMS) Test each quarter. This assessment measures student progress on state identified benchmarks in the areas of reading, math and science. Based on the student's results on the AIMS, interventions or enrichment activities are implemented. As an example, students who are not performing at a mastery level in reading or math on the AIMS are provided additional time in the computer lab to practice with the Achieve3000 reading program and web based math programs. Students in Kindergarten through 2nd grade who are not demonstrating a mastery in reading benefit from the United Way Reading Pals Program. Community volunteers spend an hour each week with their student for reading intervention and increased comprehension. Those students who are performing above mastery level and/or Gifted have additional opportunities for enrichment activities by receiving challenging pull-out services. They also participate in the Cade Museum's Academic Science Program. The Cade provides weekly hands-on science activities designed to enrich elementary students' experiences in science.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

There are five major components of the school's culture and climate: (a) safety, (b) the instructional environment, (c) positive interaction among individuals in the school environment, (d) respect for others and (e) self-respect. Within the context of maintaining a positive school environment, the staff and parents have observed several benefits which enhance the academic growth of students. Shared-decision-making between teachers and administration at CSLS contributes to teachers feeling supported by the administration, which results in a higher level of teacher commitment. A high level of teacher commitment to the success of students greatly impacts student performance as measured in the FSA.

Secondly, open communication and clearly stated classroom and school expectations assist to achieve appropriate student behavior. Constant parent and teacher interactions provide a foundation for students to focus on their purpose for being in school and motivate them to excel at a high academic level.

Furthermore, safety activities and drills are incorporated in the school's program to insure students feel safe at school and know the appropriate action to take in event of an emergency.

CSLS implements a variety of programs to assist students in developing positive interaction encounters among their peers and staff. Community members provide trainings to students on how to deal with negative behavior such as bullying and making wise choices. Various community groups such as Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. (Project Manhood), Gainesville Chapter of the Links, Inc. and guest speakers from various agencies conduct monthly presentations on an abundance of topics to assist with school success.

By employing preventive activities, the school has created a positive environment for learning. Classroom learning expectations are implemented and reviewed weekly so that students are aware of the high expectations set for them and how to make a concerted effort to work to that level. Encouragement and support are provided for students demonstrating appropriate behavior or excelling academically on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. Students who achieve specific behavioral or academic benchmarks are invited to participate in activities such as the "Caught Being Good" parties and receive "Eagle of the Month" awards.

To ascertain modifications to improve the school environment, CSLS annually administers a climate survey to students, parents and staff. Data results allow stakeholders to gain insight on ways to improve the culture of the school and stay abreast of best practices.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Community members often express that the school could not have picked a better name than Caring and Sharing Learning School. There are numerous monthly events to empower parents on and off campus that assist in impacting all stakeholders. The school kicks off the first day of school with "Fathers Bring Your Child to School Day". Fathers have additional events such as Science Night at the Cade Museum and Doughnuts with Dads. Mothers participate in Muffins with Mom. We partner with the local McDonalds Restaurants for quarterly Family Nights where families attend the chosen McDonalds and are entertained by our student performing arts program while they enjoy dinner. During the month of November, our annual Thanksgiving Feast feeds over 200 families. In addition, there are numerous school carnivals and family nights scheduled each year at the school.

CSLS strongly believes that the academic and personal success of the students is the direct result of support provided by parents, business partners, the faith-based community, civic/community groups and institutions of higher learning. Family and community involvement from various community groups play an integral part in assisting the school in achieving its goals. Members of not-for-profit organizations (fraternities, sororities, social clubs, alumni groups and others) provide more than 250 volunteer hours to the school on a yearly basis. An active and ongoing partnership with United Way brings volunteers to the school to work with individual students who can benefit from one on one coaching in reading.

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCF) has partnered with CSLS in a variety of activities

including setting up a Community Resource Center. The Community Resource Center is located adjacent to the main office area. Community members use this room for such activities as a library, copying, faxing, computer needs and Governmental Social Services assistance programs. This Community Resource Center also meets Title One guidelines that call for a Parent Resource Room. The Parent Resource room provides a variety of print materials that assist parents in effectively working with their children at home. With support from the community at large, CSLS is a fixture in the area as a community center, too. School families, faith-based groups, non-profit groups, fraternities, sororities and community agencies use the school on a regular basis for meetings and events. Our partnerships with various agencies and our positive relationships with community groups have provided avenues for families to receive employment, meals, housing, clothing, mental health assistance and become actively engaged in community events.

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

Each teacher at CSLS plays a critical role in staff development. All teachers are assigned a leadership role as either a team leader, department head or committee chair person. It is the responsibility of that specific leader to assist the principal in designing a school wide professional development plan and by researching the latest best practices in their assigned area for the school to apply on a yearly basis.

During the three day post planning period each year, the school's base needs assessment is conducted to survey the professional development needs of the teachers and staff. Each staff member will create his or her Professional Development Plan for the upcoming year. Plans are based on the results of the surveys, the annual performance appraisals and the value-added student growth data. These pieces of information are the driving force promoting professional growth in the areas with the greatest need. Professional development activities are designed to improve the quality of the instructional program by staying abreast of latest best practices. These practices are reviewed during the 5-day pre-planning period each year. During the pre-planning week, curriculum guides, classroom management strategies and individual professional development plans are created and reviewed with the principal. The professional development plan provides the teacher with an opportunity for self-reflection on personal growth along with opportunities to attend district, state and national training. CSLS also utilizes online training and webinars to assist teachers in meeting their specific needs and improve instruction. The most advantageous methods for professional development are the weekly team and school wide common planning opportunities. Teams are provided a 60-minute block to jointly collaborate on data analysis and lesson planning each Tuesday. Each Wednesday the student instructional day ends one hour earlier and school-wide staff development and a planned learning community are provided.

During the 5-day pre-planning period each year, teachers' individualized differentiated professional development plans are created. The professional development plan provides teachers a self-reflection on personal growth and opportunities to attend district, state and national training. CSLS also utilizes online training and webinars to assist teachers in meeting their specific needs. The most advantageous method of professional development is weekly team and school wide common planning. Teams are provided a 60-minute block to jointly collaborate on data analysis and lesson planning each Tuesday. Each Wednesday the student instructional day ends at 1:30 PM and school wide staff development opportunities are conducted by teachers and the principal from 1:30 PM- 2:45 PM.

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

CSLS is the epitome of shared leadership. All responsibilities of achieving an exceptional learning environment are distributed to every team member on campus.

The leadership team consists of the Principal (State Certified Education Leadership), Continuous Improvement Model Coordinator (State Certified Education Leadership), Department Chairs, Team Leaders and Title I Lead Teacher/Parent liaison. In addition, the Exceptional Student Education Specialist, Performing Arts Director, Physical Education Teacher, Office Staff and Custodians round out the team. Each team member plays an essential role in the overall success of the school.

A vertical leadership team meets weekly. The team is comprised of the principal, early childhood

coordinator, and team leaders from grades VPK-K, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6. Each team leader is the primary link between the instructional staff and the administration. Team leaders are also charged with guaranteeing student achievement and data are top priorities of every team discussion, followed by curriculum and instructional issues, parental involvement concerns, and team activities. Our CIMS coordinator attends team meetings to assist with achievement, data and curriculum. Specific departments and committees meet monthly to discuss pertinent information and data related to the success of the department and school. Each member of the leadership team has an equal voice and vote at monthly leadership meetings. The one vote, one voice consensus creates automatic buy-in from all stakeholders due to the emphasis that their decisions are impacted by the results of their specific committees and are directly connected to the overall success of each student, teacher and family.

The principal is supervised by the Board of Directors and oversees the development of the school and constantly works to achieve the goals outlined in the school's strategic plan. His administrative roles are supervising Financial Budgets, Human Resources, Curriculum and the Learning Environment. The CIMS Coordinator oversees assessment programs, discipline, grants and Professional Development. The Title I Lead Teacher/Parent Liaison maintains compliance with Title I guidelines, including preparation of records for federal monitoring and parent involvement. In addition, she supports core instruction and intervention through demo lessons, grade level meetings, walkthroughs, and assessment data conversations.

The principal and staff have an open-door policy and communicate with all families/students on a weekly basis through the "Classroom Dojo" and "Remind Me" apps, face to face communication and written announcements. Parent, student, and staff input play a key role in the day to day operations of CSLS. Students are shown how their progress affects them, the class, the school and the community. CSLS is often visited and consulted as a model school amongst its educational peers. Principal Peterson has been welcomed by various organizations to provide advice on improving student achievement. He was recently invited to the State of Florida's Senate Education Sub-Committee Panel Discussion on Struggling Schools and Students to share Strategies/Programs that have worked to improve student performance.

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

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CSLS attributes some of the school's success to "flexible cooperative grouping". Through flexible cooperative grouping, CSLS students enjoy part-ownership in their educational process. Students are pre-tested and post-tested for each new skill presented throughout the year. The results of each skill pre-test determine which flexible cooperative learning group a student will participate in for that individual skill. The classroom leader reviews the data and designs a specific process of lessons to achieve mastery for each grouping. The lesson will be a variety of computer programs, afterschool enrichment sessions and strategic classroom assignments. Students track their pre- and post-test results for progress monitoring and understand groupings are based on one specific set of skills at a time and may change after the next pretest results. In the classroom, students are grouped into four cooperative learning groups. Student cooperative groups rotate in and out of the classroom to various learning stations and labs. Each station is designed to meet the specific cooperative group's needs at the time of their rotation.

The flexible cooperative grouping affords the teacher an opportunity to create differentiated and challenging lessons for all students in the class. It is a process of providing additional support for some student groups while maintaining enrichment or acceleration opportunities for groups that have a mastery of the skills. The key component of flexible grouping as opposed to ability grouping is that students can move in and out of various groupings based on the pretest results for each new skill. Some skill groupings are designed with a variety of data levels, so that students will learn from peers. CSLS has found that students relish the fact that they are not assigned to one unequivocal cooperative group level based on one assessment for the reporting period, semester or year.

One extraordinary approach the flexible cooperative grouping strategy provided occurred during the Reading block. Volunteers from the community were easily inserted into each cooperative group for higher student achievement. The Gainesville Women's Club partnered with CSLS for Students Taking an Active Role in Reading (STARR Book Club). Members provided guest readers, materials and supplies for the Reading class cooperative groups. At the end of the school year, Alachua County School Board members were special guests at the Alachua County Public Library for a culminating program where CSLS students were paired with Gainesville Women's Club members. The School Board members were amazed at the level of reading and comprehension displayed by our students. This school term, the Reading class united to provide books and reading materials to students in Haiti. Every student signed a contract to read 30 minutes daily in exchange for a stipend that will be used to purchase books to benefit students in Haiti and the "Read to Feed" Heeler Project.