

**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    [ ] Charter    [ ] Magnet    [ ] Choice

Name of Principal Ms. Lisa Lamore

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

Official School Name Heights Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 454 South Main Street

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

City Sharon                      State MA                      Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 02067-1799

County \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (781) 784-1595                      Fax (781) 784-1599

Web site/URL https://www.sharon.k12.ma.us/Domain/301                      E-mail l\_lamore@sharon.k12.ma.us

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. Victoria Greer                      E-mail v\_greer@sharon.k12.ma.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Sharon School District                      Tel. (781) 784-1570

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 Mrs. Marcy Kaplan  
(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):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 5 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	0	0	0
K	40	47	87
1	50	38	88
2	40	38	78
3	56	36	92
4	36	50	86
5	63	42	105
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	285	251	536

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 33 % Asian
  - 2 % Black or African American
  - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 53 % White
  - 7 % 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: 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, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	9
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	1
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	10
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	501
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.020
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 4 %  
22 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Romanian, Czech, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Turkish, French, Creole, Oriya, Urdu, Marathiu, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Kunnadal, Gujarati, Nepali

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 7 %  
Total number students who qualify: 39
8. Students receiving special education services: 14 %  
74 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.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 17
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	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	25
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	23
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	23
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	6

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 20:1
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%	97%	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  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.

HES is a child-centered school where each individual is encouraged and challenged to maximize his/her potential and contribute as a member of the global world.

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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Heights Elementary School (HES) is uniquely located next to a family farm in Sharon, Massachusetts. The school was built in 1955, and a 1994 addition doubled both the building size and the student population.

HES serves a diverse community. The student body consists of 532 students (310 Caucasian, 197 Asian, 21 African-American, 4 Hispanic, and 1 American Indian) reflecting a wide variety of ethnicities and religions. Approximately 10% of the students are current or former English Language Learners (ELL.) Over 13 countries are represented in the heritage of the student body. This diversity is embraced and celebrated. Classroom and school libraries reflect literature from various cultures. Various programs exposing students to different cultures are held during the school year. Students also have the opportunity to share their culture through classroom discussions and projects (immigration unit, international feast, family traditions project, etc.)

There is also diversity in student learning profiles and socio-economic status. About 7% of the students are Free Lunch eligible. Fifty-seven students are being serviced through special education programming via their Individual Education Plans (IEPs.) Additionally, eleven students are on 504 plans. HES is also proud to host two programs for students with additional needs. There are twelve students enrolled in the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) program. Also, to address student need at HES, a satellite of the Team Based Learning (TBL) program was implemented last year. The TBL program services students with social/emotional and behavioral needs. For many years, HES hosted all of the elementary special education programs for the district. Although the programs have been dispersed among the three elementary schools in our district, HES staff has a deep history of inclusion. For instance, the various specialists have designed and implemented special classes for students in the ASD and TBL programs, since these students are sometimes overwhelmed in a larger classroom setting. Assisting all students in reaching their full potential is a guiding principle at HES.

The school climate at HES is warm, positive, and encouraging. In educating students to be global citizens, development of the whole child is emphasized. Students are provided with many opportunities for success and growth, academically, artistically, and emotionally. The school climate is one in which both students and staff feel valued.

Professional development and collaboration are important to the staff at HES. The district offers a host of workshops and courses geared to help teachers and paraprofessionals address the whole child. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Endorsement course has assisted staff in addressing the needs of ELL students. Many of the teachers and paraprofessionals have enrolled in Studying Skillful Teaching, incorporating authentic assessment and growth mindset strategies into their daily teaching. Lastly, the district's Best Practices course has also been taken by many of the staff, and its philosophies incorporated into daily teaching. Professional collaboration within and between grade levels, as well as with special education and support staff, is continual. New teachers are also provided with a mentor. As always, the purpose is to ensure that each student is receiving what s/he needs.

The academic curriculum is common core aligned. Lessons are developed to be engaging and child-centric. Efforts are made to incorporate community resources, such as the school garden and grounds, Sharon Historical Society, the nearby Massachusetts Audubon property, the adjacent farm, etc., to make learning come to life. Lessons are also differentiated, providing both opportunity for modification and challenge. Lesson objectives are posted in the classroom reflecting higher order thinking skills, as delineated in Bloom's Revised Taxonomy. Through student discussion and collaboration, students have the opportunity to take control of their own learning. Each grade level shares a class set of iPads. This technology provides students with the ability to create products that demonstrate their understanding of the curriculum. Outside the classroom, Response to Intervention (RtI) is used to support students with deficits in math and reading. Enrichment math programs are offered after school. In addition to academics, foreign language, physical education, and the fine arts are emphasized, providing students with the opportunity to grow and succeed in a different setting.

Additionally, HES is concerned with the social/emotional growth of students. Staff members pride themselves on utilizing growth mindset and Responsive Classroom® techniques to provide students with a balanced environment – both rigorous and nurturing. At the start of school, students are involved in setting classroom rules, rewards, and consequences. Anti-bullying curriculum is explicitly taught, and school-wide positive reinforcement practices are in place. Students are taught to look beyond themselves and become global citizens through community service initiatives. Giving back to the community by making lunches for the local homeless shelter, holding community food and clothing drives, and participating in a jump rope fund-raiser are just several of the ways in which this occurs.

Lastly, the school staff strives to ensure that families are a vibrant part of the school community. Parent volunteers help in the classroom and at recess. Students showcase their work through events such as author's breakfast, states fair, math career fair, biography wax museum, art show, and vocal and instrumental concerts. Families eagerly attend school activities, such as family pizza nights, talent shows, and literacy and science nights. Parents are kept abreast of school and classroom activities through e-mails, newsletters, and blogs.

In summary, valuing each student at HES as a unique individual and assisting that student in becoming his/her best self is the mission of each staff member. As Robert Collier said, "Success is the sum of small efforts – repeated day in and day out."

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

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

Heights Elementary School (HES) K-5 implements the MA ELA, Math Science and Social Studies Frameworks.

#### Reading

Heights Elementary School (HES) uses curriculum maps that include the Massachusetts standards. Aspects of the ELA standards include big understandings; essential questions, and important skills and concepts students need to know. HES teachers implement an 80 minute balanced literacy block that includes a workshop approach involving guided reading with explicit instruction, modeling and independent reading with students reading “just right” selected texts. Teachers also conference with students and teach explicit strategies for interpreting and analyzing texts. The approach is flexible and collaborative and engages students in small groups. Mobile technologies are also used for phonics practice, reading and comprehension, and reading response writing.

#### Writing

Grade level expectations include informational/explanatory, opinion and narrative writing. The six traits of effective writing serve as a framework for students to learn and apply writing skills and to provide a common language for evaluating writing. Writing traits provide a common language while supporting the teaching of writing as a process. Students write in all content areas allowing them opportunities to build meaning, to learn and retain content and to revisit their learning. FUNdations is one resource teachers use to promote word study in grades K-2. A spelling word study is offered at grade 3; grades 4 and 5 students use a Spelling Sourcebook in addition to the “Nifty, Thrifty, Fifty”. Students are accountable for accurately spelling core words in all writing. K- 2 teachers use the FUNdations program to teach handwriting. Instruction in cursive begins in grade 3.

#### Mathematics

Mastery of standards is measured by student’s ability to utilize multiple strategies, explain thinking through visual models, construct arguments and critique the reasoning of others. Therefore, teachers are continually working to shift the balance from teacher-directed math classrooms, to student-centered classrooms where student discourse is emphasized. Students are provided one hour of instructional time to explore concepts, construct meaning, and engage in discussions with their peers. K-5 Math Expressions is the program used at all grade levels. It was chosen for its alignment to MA Content and Practice Standards. Lessons offer students active opportunities to process information through visual models, sharing of student work and student-led discussions. Teachers use the Math Workshop and Math Stations model as they form small groups, differentiate instruction and confer with students. This type of instruction offers opportunities for teachers to guide the learning process by providing immediate feedback and individualizing instruction through extension and remedial learning experiences.

#### Science

Teachers use a comprehensive standards-based program that provides students with relevant learning experiences across all domains of science. The district has adopted FOSS-Full Operation Science Solutions, and teachers have created lessons to align to the state standards. Instruction is provided through a guided inquiry and hands-on approach. Students observe phenomena, design and perform experiments, gather and analyze data, make claims supported by evidence to draw reasonable conclusions and then communicate their results. Science experiences have students working in small groups or partnerships with materials and tools performing experiments. They then debrief their findings in small and large groups. Science lessons focus on discussions central to the essential question and how the topic connects to students’ lives. Students conduct an investigation that links to the essential question. They explore, record and analyze data. Students then connect their analysis to the overarching essential ideas and concepts and make written and oral claims based upon their evidence.

#### Social Studies

The SS curriculum is taught through a variety of materials (e.g. literature, maps, time lines, nonfiction texts, simulations), and is based on four strands: Time, Continuity & Change; Places & Environments; Production, Consumption & Trade; Identity, Community Leadership & Governance. At each grade level, units have been developed to support the curriculum frameworks and Sharon Learning Standards. Kindergarten focuses on an introduction to community. Grade 1 is an introduction to American Holidays. Grade 2 is an introduction to events in the past through the Pilgrims and Wampanoags. In grade 3, the theme is “communities” with the focus on local and Massachusetts’ history, geography, government, economic and civic life. The fourth grade focuses on themes of culture (e.g. Native American) and geography (e.g. the study of regions and landforms in the U.S. and North America, Canada and Mexico). Grade 5 concentrates on U.S. history from American Beginnings--1650 to Creating a New Nation--1815 and connects to early discoveries in other parts of the world, such as Pre-Columbian and European explorers. The development of our government and laws is examined through the early history of the U.S. Selected children’s literature and a variety of non-fiction texts are used to support the social studies themes. Literacy skills are developed through the social studies content, using a range of engaging practices.

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

At HES there is a strong commitment to develop the WHOLE child through academic, technological, fine arts, physical, and social emotional experiences. The curriculum is complemented by twice a week PE, once a week art, music and library. Additionally, at grades 4 & 5 chorus and instrumental music are each offered 1 period a week. HES teachers promote social wellness by implementing strategies promoted in the Responsive Classroom and the Strong Kids curriculum. Technology education is infused through all curricular areas. Teachers use Epsom boards and document cameras to teach.

The art teacher teaches visual arts through hands-on learning experiences, including the use of paints, clay, yarn, craypaz, markers, colored pencils and crayons. The teacher complements the understanding of artistic style through varied pieces of literature. The teacher works with special education students in the Autism and Team Based Learning Programs (emotional-behavior). She has one additional period each week to teach students in small groups, and she may preview techniques or teach an art lesson that is tailored to students’ abilities. The art teacher has sought grants from the local education foundation and PTO to bring a kiln and weaving machine to her program. This year the art teacher is infusing a STEAM project in Gr. 3 classes and will do four challenges that focus on group work and problem solving.

The music teacher has a hands-on approach to the study of music as students learn about music as a universal form of expression. Basic skills are built in the areas of the foundational elements of music (Melody, Rhythm, Harmony and Form). Students experience hands-on instruction in hand drumming, Shona style marimba, ukulele and the Orff instrumentarium. Chorus is a study of basic singing skills and the application of these skills in the context of a two part-singing ensemble. Band is a study of basic instrument technique and note reading literacy in the context of a traditional wind band with brass and woodwind instruments. Orchestra is a study of basic instrument technique and note reading literacy in the context of a string ensemble. HES also offers a special Zimbabwean style marimba group for approximately 20 students. This style of music is unique and consists of complicated layered patterns of music with students playing 5-8 parts in a song. This offers a significant challenge for those students who demonstrate exceptional skill and interest.

The PE curriculum follows NASPE STANDARDS teaching basic motor skills. Areas that are focused on are eye/hand coordination, eye/foot coordination, ball skills, group cooperation activities, and team building skills. The curriculum program is enhanced through the use of Jump Rope for Heart which is implemented in conjunction with the American Heart Association (AHA). Infused within the NASPE standards is the NASA Train Like an Astronaut NASA Program. Formal integration into Heights PE classes began in early 2012.

The K-FLEX program serves kindergarten students with a fun, engaging 10-day curriculum to introduce students to very basic concepts in Spanish. FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools) curriculum

is a push-in model conducted exclusively in the target language (Spanish). There are three 20-minute sessions per week in each first and second grade classroom. Essential skills acquired during FLES time dovetail with the MA Common Core and cover age-appropriate and socially-emotionally appropriate topics ranging from math and the weather to virtual trips to Spanish-speaking countries and team problem-solving skills. FLES is scheduled to expand to grades 3 and 4. The FLEX program (Foreign Language EXploratory Program) exposes all fifth grade students district-wide to three languages (Spanish, French and Mandarin) with the main goal being to allow students to experience each language and, consequently, based on their experiences make an informed decision about their language choice upon entering middle school.

When possible, the Library Teacher and Instructional Technology Specialist (ITS) collaborate on grade level projects and school-wide activities. Throughout the year, students have the opportunity to participate in a variety of learning opportunities including Skyping with schools around the country in celebration of World Read Aloud Day and International Dot Day. The team co-teaches and plans online safety and digital literacy lessons, as well as research projects with an emphasis on reviewing important research skills. 4th Graders participated in a design thinking challenge, CityX Project utilizing the school's 3D printer. The team and community visit the growing makerspace to tinker, build, create, and explore. Makerspace materials include Sphero Robots, BeeBots, LittleBits, recycled supplies, origami, magnetic blocks, K'Nex, Lego bricks, Lego wall, Makey Makey, green screen, Bloxels, and stop motion video. In addition, the library curriculum focuses on skills such as asking and answering questions, locating print and electronic resources, evaluating resources, sharing knowledge and learning in a variety of ways including blogging. Students are encouraged to pursue personal reading interests and appreciate award-winning literature. Each class also generally meets with the ITS once a week for 40 minutes, but this time can be extended to multiple tech. blocks each day or week to complete projects. Technology exploration includes Introduction to technology tools (iPads, laptops, desktops), Introduction to apps focused on creativity and sharing knowledge, and collaboration between the library and classroom teachers.

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

The instructional approaches that are clearly seen across the grade levels at Heights Elementary School include a guided and modeled approach to instruction where an I do, you do, we do model exists. Students are at the center of the learning and the teacher facilitates instruction with students' thinking and leading at the forefront. Students learn as the teacher thinks aloud during guided modeling and invites collaborative student feedback. During the full group process, students may often turn and talk with a partner to realize new perspectives, opinions, and thinking. The partners offer their perspective during the full group modeling. Students then practice on examples using a white board, response sheet or examples at the board or under the document camera. Responses are evaluated in the partnerships and the full group. At the board students and the teacher share examples and discuss. Once adequate modeling and practice have occurred during the full group instruction, students practice independently, in partnership, or in the small group. At this time the teacher may meet with a small group of those that need further instruction and the breakdown of instructional parts. At this time some students may be working on a differentiated response related to content, process or product. The teacher may also move about the classroom to check in on students and their work products.

from the math program, classwork, thumbs up/down, exit slips, science notebooks, social studies quick writes, reading responses, running records, math automaticity assessments and FUNdations assessments. Summative assessments include unit math tests, twice a year Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) results, twice a year I-ready\* data benchmarking, and the monthly benchmark writing assignments given to students K-5 across three genres of writing.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

School Climate/Culture-Students at HES are continually engaged and motivated by an interesting and engaging curriculum. Our curriculum is consistently updated and reviewed to embrace the Common Core and to bring new ideas for teaching and learning to the forefront. Teachers impart the curriculum through varied pedagogical approaches as they consider student centered learning, promoting students at the heart of thinking and doing. They are actively learning through whole class, small group, partnership and individual learning opportunities. Students are also given the chance to cross grade level share through classroom learning celebrations, learning buddies, community service events, recycling efforts, technology partnerships, and garden partnerships at the school level. Beyond HES, the high school grade 1 storybook projects and Spanish conversation opportunities result in very special older peer collaboration. The social and emotional (SEL) opportunities arise as children participate in classroom communities, which support the Responsive Classroom philosophy. The SEL coach has been involved in sharing a new curriculum through the Strong Kids resource, and our school psychologist offers lunch groups to work on social/emotional skills. HES staff share monthly staff breakfasts, baby showers and special gatherings hosted by different grade levels and departments, which allow for a natural and fun exchange among all members of the adult community. The staff has been involved in writing PTO mini grants and Sharon Education Foundation grants to enhance the curriculum. These efforts have resulted in a soda bottle greenhouse, 3-D printers in the library and gym, a kiln for the art room, a STEAM project in art at grade 3, a grade level set of ukeles, enhancements to the school garden, maker space in the library, ball project, a book initiative on WONDER, and robotics instructional modules for two grade levels. Staff is always invited to think beyond and to take risks as our learning community tries new ideas. The staff is involved in selecting new hires and then integrating new members into the community through their participation on grade level and department interview teams and mentorship initiatives. The staff has the opportunity to develop curriculum and present new curriculum to one another through their participation on district curriculum teams. Our professionals have been instrumental in providing books groups, face to face professional development, and in holding special coffees for one another as new ideas are promoted!

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Engaging Families and Communities-The home, school and community partnership is of the utmost importance as we educate the students at HES. As the school year begins we welcome the new students and their families to an orientation at HES before the start of school. In September, we welcome ALL parents to open house evenings where the grade level curriculum and classroom expectations are presented. As students make transitions from one school to another, we hold kindergarten orientation, a kids with kids program and summer picnics before K students start school. Grade 5 parents have an orientation to sixth grade and we have our fifth graders visit the middle school and tour the school in the summer with their parents. Consistent communication (E-mail, phone, web presence) to and from the classroom and home is a strong expectation at HES. To update parents on student performance, parents attend conferences two times a year and receive report cards twice a year. Throughout the year parents are invited to serve on the PTO in varied ways, attend classroom celebrations, volunteer in the classroom, present as a mystery reader or expert in the field; chaperone field experiences, participate in field day and end of year activities for grade 5. Parents are sometimes involved in special evenings including the new math program, a Massachusetts General Hospital evening on THINK KIDS, and were involved in an evening on a new universal assessment and screening tool, I-ready. Parents are updated on all school related events, projects and initiatives during PTO and school council meetings that are regularly scheduled throughout the year. Biweekly communication about school happenings is provided by the principal through e-mail. Parent/student gatherings demonstrating and celebrating curriculum occur during the annual K & 1 literacy night, grade 5 Math Career Fair, grade 1 authors' breakfasts, grade 2 & 3 author's share and wax museums, grade 4 international feasts, Read Across America Day, school art show, grade 4/5 concerts, and K-5 parent participation in PE classes through Jump for Heart (Heart Association Fundraiser) and the dance unit. HES staff have welcomed senior citizens in to volunteer in addition to welcoming past graduates of HES who are now in need of observation and practicum experience as they enter the teaching profession. Our PTO

does an excellent job of involving parents and children in grade level pizza parties, Providence Bruin events, spring Red Sox events, auctions, talent shows and in a very special community mural. Josh Winer, artist in residence, will work with staff, students and parents to create several tile panels illustrating the vision of our school community. This will take place in March, 2017, and we will celebrate a ribbon cutting at our April Art Show!

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

Professional Development-Professional development opportunities for staff are derived from the goals of the district's strategic plan and particular yearly needs that arise. In the area of pedagogical approaches, the district office has provided the Skillful Teacher for all K-12 staff (30-class hours-24 staff). Staff gain teaching and learning practices that will "strengthen teachers' convictions about students' abilities to learn and their instructional capacity for promoting all students' motivation, learning and achievement." The course offers opportunities for reflection around the decisions teachers make that influence students' motivation, learning and achievement. Best Practice has been offered for four years and is "Bringing Standards to Life in America's Classroom" (26 staff-19.5 class hours) Teachers gain insight and expertise in becoming a more effective teacher through the utilization of current best practices and a focus on student-centered learning. Study involves gradual release of responsibility, classroom workshop, strategic thinking, collaborative activities, integrative units, representing to learn, and formative-reflective assessment. Math professional development at HES is in its third year of implementation with the Math Expressions Program. In years I & II the program staff provided quarterly training to teachers K-5. The teachers continued evaluative training through their routine math and grade level meetings throughout the year. In years III & IV (2015/16, 2016/17), the coordinator, math specialists and teachers have been focusing on Math Talk professional development. The focus of MathTalk (10 staff-18 class hours) is to enhance students' social skills needed to manage and participate in student-centered discussions, increase the ratio of student talk to teacher talk during whole group discussions, engaging more students during math talks, and increasing students' repertoire of talk moves. During the past four years administrators and teachers have been taking PD to become proficient in Sheltered English Immersion- SEI (23 staff 15-30 class hours) course. The course prepares teachers and administrators with the knowledge and skills to effectively shelter content instruction so the growing population of English Language Learners (ELLS) can access curriculum and achieve academic success. The course helps staff to effectively carry out their responsibilities for the teaching and learning of ELLs, as well as to understand the social and cultural issues that contribute to and impact the schooling of ELLs. The principal and vice principal involve themselves in the same yearlong professional development that the teachers have. They learn alongside the staff and also seek to ensure that initiatives are carried over within classrooms. Additionally, the principal serves on the ELA and SS curriculum review committees to research updated best teaching practices and core content alignment. Professional development is not limited to the initiatives mentioned, administration and staff have also had educator evaluation trainings, safety trainings-ALICE, Innovation Days districtwide and department based content pd as well. The district maintains a PD website where yearlong offerings are described. HES staff are continually committed as lifelong learners.

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

School Leadership-The principal maintains a collaborative leadership style. She strives to recognize and promote the value of each individual. The principal invests in each and every person as she learns about the individual's professional philosophy of education. The coherent philosophy of leadership promotes the idea that as a team, we achieve more. The principal knows the professional strengths and weaknesses of each individual and works heartily with the individual to celebrate success and grow through the improvement process. Staff who have exemplified quality instructional practice have been asked to share knowledge and assist in the training of others. Staff who have new ideas based on sound educational research are supported and encouraged to promote those ideas within grade level and department teams. They often seek financial funding through local budgets, the PTO and education grants. The principal utilizes key members of the grade level and department teams to assist in the movement of student, curricular and pedagogical initiatives. The RTI teams (regular & special ed. staff) spend time (every 8 weeks or so) reviewing performance data to determine student progress and the need to adjust groupings and practice. The collaborative leadership process includes an assistant principal who also serves as an educational team

leader. She collaborates with the special education team to oversee the ASD (autism program) and TBL (emotional/behavioral program) as well as the varied individual education plans (IEPs) within our student community. The assistant principal and special education team meet 3-4 times per month to review IEPs and specific cases. The special education team is involved in collaborating with regular education teachers to teach them about students with disabilities. The team partners identify key instructional practices and classroom accommodations. Between the RTI meetings and the special education meetings there are many discussions about student performance and strong reflection about the best practice in moving students forward. In addition to the principal, vice principal/ETL, grade level and department level leadership, HES is benefitted by the leadership of the elementary coordinators. Core academic content revisions and updates are recommended by the math, ELA, and science/social studies coordinators. The coordinators ensure the development of a curriculum that is aligned with the Common Core Standards and best practices. The principal also oversees one specialty area (music, art and PE). Music, art and PE staff self-initiate as a group and the principal is there to facilitate and support their ideas. The varied levels of leadership within the levels of administration, grade level and department teams, contribute to a holistic approach toward the improvement of student performance and the initiation of educational innovation.

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

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Every day the staff at Heights Elementary School (HES) strives to help each child become her/his best self. This is done through a myriad of practices. However, the driving force behind the school's success is the desire to reach the learner where s/he is at that point in time. This is accomplished through differentiation.

Differentiation happens at many different levels. Each day in classrooms, lessons are differentiated. Through formal and informal means, students are assessed to determine readiness for curriculum. Lessons are tailored to meet students' needs.

At a high level, there are school wide initiatives. HES has two unique special education programs: Team Based Learning (TBL), which supports students with atypical social-emotional needs, and the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), which supports students with that neurodevelopment disorder. In both programs, academic and behavioral plans are tailored to the individual students to help them succeed in the school, home, and community settings. Another level of differentiation is provided through special education services. Also, sheltered English instruction helps to bridge language gaps for English Language Learners (ELL.) Lastly, Response to Intervention (RtI) is used to address the needs of regular education students with learning gaps. These supports happen within and outside of the regular education classroom.

Differentiation within classrooms takes many forms. Lesson content, process, and product maybe differentiated. Lessons are also designed using many modalities. Keeping Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences in mind, teachers look to incorporate a variety of learning styles. The interpersonal style is one that is used in many lessons. Students do a think-pair-share to discuss understanding of concepts and readings, helping them to process content. Kinesthetic lessons, whereby students are doing hands-on activities, are particularly powerful, as retention of key concepts is higher.

Regarding content, lessons are taught using a variety of formats: readings, experiments, videos, stations, etc. Most lessons use the gradual release method, where students have teacher and peer support before moving onto independent practice. Here, peers help to facilitate learning. Studies have shown that students have a deeper understanding of content, if they are able to teach it to others.

In addition, growth mindset philosophies are utilized. These values help students feel comfortable in taking risks with their learning. Mistakes are honored and used as a teaching tool. Lastly, students are able to demonstrate knowledge through a variety of means. Differentiating by product is important, as students are more invested if they have choice. Technology is often used to demonstrate understanding, and this is motivating to students. Meeting students at their readiness level makes them feel that they can be successful. In turn, this motivation helps them to achieve success.