

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. 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 2018 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 2012 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: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
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

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 14 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 16 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
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	47	45	92
4	56	26	82
5	44	48	92
6	37	53	90
7	42	47	89
8	35	56	91
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	261	275	536

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 15 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 22 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 3 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 49 % White
 - 10 % 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 2016 – 2017 school year: <01%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	0
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	0
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	0
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<01

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

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

Arabic, Cambodian, Cantonese, Farsi, Filipino, French, German, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Ukrainian, Vietnamese.

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 10%
Total number students who qualify: 53

8. Students receiving special education services: 4 %
24 Total number of students served

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

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>7</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>5</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>9</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	19
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
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 28:1

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

Required Information	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	98%	97%
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 2017.

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

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. 2012

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

We are the North Star Academy Gryphons, landing place of mighty scholars. We were drawn here by our shared academic talent and our desire to be of value to others. Every day we persevere to build a sense of wonder in our community so that we all may soar into a future worthy of our efforts.

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

North Star accepts applications from students all around the bay area. While we are a public school, there is an application process in order to be granted admittance. To begin, applications are submitted into an online school’s of choice program called School Mint. The application included basic information, as well as the students current and previous years report cards. These packets, along with the results of a tests, CogAt7, are reviewed by the administration. Each subtest of the CogAt7: verbal, quantitative, and non-verbal, are awarded three possible points each for a total of 9 points. These points are based on where students’ score in their age stanine. Each report card is evaluated on their 21st century learning skills, as well as their math and language arts scores. There is a possible 8 points available for report cards. In order to address equity concerns, students who qualify for free and reduced lunch programs, as well as students who are considered second language learners receive extra points. The highest score possible is 20 points, however if students receive 12 points they are considered “qualified”. Once a student has been qualified, the district schools of choice lottery system is used to find if they receive a spot or if they are on the wait list.

PART III – SUMMARY

North Star Academy's mission is to provide a challenging learning environment that promotes excellence and motivates highly capable students to develop to their fullest potential and become successful and productive citizens.

North Star provides an educational environment that focuses the unique needs of highly capable students. The program focuses on the combination of creativity, task commitment and high academic rigor, to support students in developing to their fullest potential. The pace of instruction, the depth and complexity of the grade level curriculum, the types of assignments, and the range of experiences provide a learning atmosphere that promotes excellence. All students are expected to demonstrate personal growth through the development of self-discipline, leadership skills, community involvement, and character growth. North Star has been a school of choice serving 3rd - 8th grade students living within and outside the boundaries of the Redwood City School District for the past twenty years. Students are selected to attend North Star Academy through an application process. The school offers a series of school visitations during the application process in which prospective parents can determine if the school will be a good fit for their child's needs. The three subtests of Verbal, Non-Verbal Reasoning, and Quantitative of the CogAT 7, report card academic, and task commitment information are used to consider eligibility. Once students are identified as eligible, a lottery process is used to determine enrollment.

Woven into our core curriculum is the expectation that all students demonstrate critical, logical, and creative thinking skills in all curricular areas. Students are expected to meet and exceed the standards of the core curriculum to the best of their abilities. In the process students will use emerging technologies as tools in all areas of the curriculum to solve problems, to think critically, to express their creativity and to communicate effectively. Teachers design learning activities to add more depth and complexity to the standard curricular expectations. The Compacted Curriculum offers a change from the traditional pace of the curriculum, freeing up time for enrichment. Our school philosophy is derived from the work of Dr. Joseph Renzulli. Dr. Renzulli is one of the leaders in the field of gifted education. His ideas of compacting curriculum in order to enrich students' academic experiences are incorporated into lesson planning and implementation at North Star Academy.

Through differentiated instruction, students master the core curriculum to the best of their ability. This allows for students to be immersed in challenging and rigorous content. Differentiated instruction also provides students with the opportunity to dive deeper into curricular areas and pursue enrichment activities. The last period of the day is dedicated to students participating in extensive enrichment activities throughout the year. Enrichment activities vary each term, reflecting the diverse passions and interests of teachers and students.

Since North Star Academy was awarded a National Blue Ribbon status in 2012, many changes have taken place in regards to curriculum and instruction. For the past four years, North Star Academy worked with Dr. Richard Cash, a highly regarded consultant for the gifted and talented. His areas of expertise in educational programming, rigorous and challenging curriculum design for gifted students, differentiated instruction, 21st century skills, brain compatible classrooms, and self-regulated learning have help guide North Star staff to better serve our highly capable students with providing more depth, complexity and rigor across all subject matter.

By partnering with our families, we have begun tracking our students beyond their time at North Star Academy. Over the past ten years alone, 8th grade graduates have gone on to a variety of public, private and charter high schools in the local Bay Area. Many return to North Star Academy and volunteer to foster current students' relationships to high school and beyond. Students have gone on to be student body leaders, captains and/or leaders on sports teams, MVPs in various sports, student assistants and more. Numerous students have received highly respected college scholarships including: Sequoia Awards, Redwood City Rotary Scholarship, and Triple Impact Sports Award Scholarships. The majority of alumni have gone on to higher education after high school ranging from local junior colleges to highly respected universities across the country including Stanford, UC Berkeley, UCLA, Purdue, Columbia, Harvard, Duke, Boston University

and the University of Vermont. Once a North Star Gryffon, one will always be a part of our family.

As a National Blue Ribbon School North Star has become a well known academic institution, which provides a top notch education to students from all around the bay area. Redwood City, like many local districts, is experiencing a decline in enrollment. Because of our Blue Ribbon Status, we are able to not only keep enrollment up, but bring students in from other school districts. This helps us maintain an outstanding applicant pool, and a long waiting list. Since we were awarded Blue Ribbon status, the number of applications has gone up by at least 30% each year. Being a Blue Ribbon School is a source of pride for our community. Parents, staff, and students alike, feel confident in the education provided at North Star because of this recognition.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

North Star Academy uses the Common Core Standards as the basis of instruction in all core curriculum classes. These classes include English language arts, social studies, math and science. Students at North Star Academy are characterized as highly engaged, motivated and advanced learners; our focus is advancing students up in levels, from at-grade level to above-grade level in these four subject areas.

With North Star Academy's work with Dr. Richard Cash, teachers have implemented strategies such as teaching the students the four Depth of Knowledge level questions: factual, convergent, divergent and analytical. In this approach students demonstrate their understanding through asking and answering Depth of Knowledge level questions. "Depth of Knowledge" (DoK) categorizes tasks according to the complexity of thinking required to successfully complete them. This has allowed students to dive deeper in their understanding of all core subject text.

In language arts the focus is getting students above grade level in reading and writing. Students' average reading scores are 2-5 years above grade level. Teachers use adopted curriculum, Benchmark with 3rd-5th grades and Amplify with 6th-8th grade, as well as supplemental materials to differentiate instruction. Foundational skills are taught once, and then spiraled into the content through group work, direct instruction, and in-depth projects. Rubrics are used to highlight exemplar work, so students know what they need to demonstrate to move to the next level. Language arts teachers are currently working on establishing benchmarks for entry and exit expectations for each grade level, and developing aligned rubrics. Our school focus this year is on writing. The writing process is used across content areas, to show mastery of content as well as writing skills. Throughout the year, students' progress is monitored in language arts by various assessments. The results from these assessments are shared with students to find areas of growth and strengths. Students build on these to demonstrate mastery.

Social Studies is integrated into language arts, science and math through the core curriculum in grades 3-5. We use state adopted materials for foundational learning. Local, state and national government is the focus in various projects and experiential learning extend students' deep understanding of cultures and people, and the role they play in our world's history. The curriculum is supplemented by field trips to local historically relevant sites, where students learn first hand about the experience of our forefathers. In the 6th-8th grade, we also use state adopted materials for foundational learning, however, the focus is on group project-based learning, where students develop technological products designed to teach others beyond the classroom walls.

The state adopted math curriculum, College Preparatory Mathematics (CPM) for grades 6-8 and Envision for 3-5, is the basis for instruction in mathematics. With these curricula, students are challenged to approach a problem through various thinking strategies. CPM's spiral approach allows students to experience "Problems of the Week", learning challenges, and to approach problems through a variety of methods and rationale that review and preview content. Envision uses a similar problem solving approach, while still building the foundational math skills students need. When you go into a math class at North Star, you will see students working individually, in groups, or presenting their thinking to their peers. The core curriculum includes advanced math courses for students who are mathematically capable, including diversified pathways into highly advanced math coursework. We work hard to meet each student's mathematical development potential. Students can learn at their own pace.

Science at North Star Academy uses integrated science units to teach a hands-on approach to experiential learning in a science lab and within their classrooms. The middle school is in the final year of a 3-year transition to the Next Generation Science Standards, using technology to help further students exploration into the world around them. Elementary classrooms utilize and adapt Full Option Science System kits to integrate NGSS practices until official district transition begins next year. Students use interactive notebooks to keep track of their findings and analyze their data. Digital portfolios are used in the upper grades to catalog students' learning. Field trips complete their hands-on learning time with real world application of

their learning. We partner with local agencies to bring in experts to share knowledge.

At North Star, our students use the core curriculum as a foundation for a lifetime of advanced learning.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

A signature component of the North Star experience is our Enrichment program. “Enrichment” at the end of the day is a unique opportunity for students to de-stress from the academic rigor of the day and either try something new or go deeper into an area of interest. During four 45-minute periods per week, 4th through 8th graders rub shoulders in a diverse set of offerings. These electives change each trimester, and reflect the varied experience and expertise of our talented staff and parents. From sports and fitness to handicrafts and foreign language, a small sampling of past and present Enrichment classes includes: photography, dance, architecture, computer programming, robotics, cooking, leadership, puppetry, watercolor painting, rock climbing, journalism, fly fishing, chess, American Sign Language, quilting, dog obedience, yearbook and yoga. Every trimester, one full school day is set aside for each enrichment class to venture outside the classroom on a field trip that further enriches the students’ experience. Full-day Enrichment trips take a variety of forms and have included tours of a local radio station, city hall, and a school for the deaf, as well as visits to museums and local businesses.

North Star offers students multiple opportunities to explore the arts. In the elementary grades, trained parent volunteers deliver engaging lessons through a high quality, comprehensive locally curated visual arts program called Art In Action. Lessons teach vocabulary and concepts from the Common Core Standards for the Visual Arts while giving students experience with drawing, painting, and sculpture techniques. During these lessons, which average once per month, students study a single work by a famous artist, then experiment with a similar style and technique to create their own artistic masterpieces. Besides helping students appreciate artistic works from cultures all around the world, the program helps foster critical thinking, creativity, and visual literacy.

North Star students have two opportunities each year to showcase their dramatic and musical talents in a major stage performance. In the fall, we team with a local children’s theater production company to produce a delightful stage comedy, featuring fourth through eighth graders. In the winter, students may audition for roles in a major musical production. Students team with parents to handle most aspects of our productions, including costumes, props, set design, stage crew, tech, and concessions.

North Star provides a weekly music education program for all elementary students called Music for Minors. Beginning as 6th graders, students may elect to participate in an instrumental music program which practices during and after school. The instrumental music students perform during the fall play and select dates in the spring.

We offer students a comprehensive physical education program taught by a credentialed physical education teacher. North Star partners with a local sports agency to provide PE three times per week to elementary students and four times per week to middle school students. Our PE program focuses on the California State Standards for Physical Education, engaging students in skill-based activities and game play, including volleyball, basketball, soccer, and badminton. The technology standards are woven within the core curricula of language arts, social studies and science. Middle school implements online platforms in all subject areas. Students in 3rd grade utilize a web based typing program to initiate keyboarding skills which are later reinforced in the 4th and 5th grades. North Star partners with Common Sense Media to provide lessons on digital citizenship and the appropriate use of technology at every grade level.

North Star offers instruction in Spanish as a foreign language to students in grades 7 and 8. Students must select Spanish as an elective and attend class for four 45-minute sessions per week during the Enrichment period. Credentialed instructors teach California State Standards for Spanish I, and graduates of the two-year North Star Spanish program typically test into Spanish II or III as high school freshmen.

North Star shares a newly renovated library with the McKinley Institute of Technology. The library is open for class visits during the school day and to individual students during lunch and recess. Third grade classes

visit the library weekly and fourth grade classes visit twice per month. The full time librarian makes a concerted effort to populate her shelves with books that support each grade level's specific curricular needs.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Our North Star teachers meet the diverse and individual needs of our students by weaving in various activities and differentiated instruction, acknowledging the students' styles of learning, and embracing their backgrounds and cultural heritage. Lessons are created and implemented with this in mind, promoting enthusiasm for learning and the development of great thinkers. With a smaller school, we are able to establish and foster close, caring relationships with our students. We have a variety of classes and programs, such as our math pathways, which meet students' individual needs.

Our enrichment program allows exploration of interests and the development of non-academic skills. In addition, we have many after-school programs, such as German, Mandarin, Hip-Hop, Gaming, Geometry, choir, etc. that provides an outlet for student involvement. We use universal student language, such as 'Scholars, Mathematicians, Historians and Scientists' to describe all of our students.

Throughout our elementary and middle school, we adapt numerous instructional strategies that provide students with skills, tools, and perspectives to prepare them for future schooling and beyond. We build upon their backgrounds to further develop their abilities and higher level cognitive skills, through a challenging and enriching curriculum. We include different platforms of learning, such as our integration of technology. Lessons have included the use of Google Classroom and other Google tools, Class Dojo, Survey Monkey, Plickers, Scratch, etc. in which students and teachers use and create to benefit a learning environment. Third and fourth grade teachers use Google Classroom to encourage student discussion of academic topics and engage in professional development opportunities to become further equipped with new instructional tools and resources. Our grade-level curricula include various teaching methods stemming from data and research, such as a student-centered focus in our classes, hands-on activities, group work and roles, project-based learning, and inquiry based learning. For example, sixth grade math students study food insecurity around the world and its local ramifications, raising awareness and money to build a better understanding of how they can positively affect the world around them.

We have dedicated staff, such as our outreach counselor, inclusion specialist, and aids that assist our students with special needs. We continually have SST, IEP, and 504 Plan meetings throughout the year to better accommodate our students' learning and behavior needs. These include parent or guardian involvement, as well as other outreach sources, such as Star Vista. This allows us to support and prepare our students with special needs to succeed in various environments in the future. For students who have social and emotional needs, we have a 3-tiered approach. The first tier involves basic friendship counseling and conflict resolution. The second tier involves more intensive approaches of therapy, social skills groups, and behavior contracts. The final tier involves special education services at the school and district level. Any student with needs have various avenues to help them succeed. For academic needs, we have our resource room, staffed with various specialists, and SHINE club, an afterschool program to provide time for students to work and get help on assignments. Many teachers offer individual help when students are struggling in understanding concepts and not meeting grade level. Teachers have regular communication with parents, as well as colleagues to help develop support plans for student success.

Our high levels of achievement are maintained through our continued efforts to provide students with challenging and rigorous curriculum. Three times a year, students are assessed through a district benchmark assessment. These standardized assessments measure their progress towards mastery in Mathematics and language arts. During their release days, they analyze the data to inform their instructional path. We analyze reading assessments to monitor progress and set goals. These help students attain higher levels of achievement. In the classroom, students are evaluated through formal and informal assessment, including self-reflections, through the use of technology and media, etc. This spring, North Star participated in student-led conferences, in which students had to reflect on their academic, social and emotional strengths and growth opportunities, as well as their goals for the remainder of the school year and next year. Our comprehensive approach to the development of the holistic child sets us apart and ensures that every scholar

can be their best self at North Star.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The inclusive culture of North Star Academy is founded on an appreciation of uniqueness and diversity. Students are engaged and motivated through a compacted curriculum, a rich and rigorous academic schedule, and an enrichment program that provides for choice and student interest. PBIS (Positive Based Interventions and Supports) at North Star come through the STARS program (Safe Thoughtful Accountable Respectful Scholars). This includes a monthly celebration of character traits, such as responsibility, respect, accountability and others. Students' positive behavior are recognized in a monthly flag salute celebration. Students "caught" demonstrating the monthly character trait are given tickets that are redeemed for prizes.

North Star Academy provides a positive social/emotional environment through our School Outreach Program with a school counselor, Star Vista one-on-one counseling, and Project Cornerstone, which is a character development program teaching fairness, understanding and respect of others. Volunteer parents, under the direction of the Outreach Counselor, provide monthly classes. Our students who are part of the special education program, are supported through a unique social cognitive class led by the inclusion specialist. Service learning is a part of the curriculum at North Star. Class projects include WE Can Be The Change partnered with the WE.org and Just Us for Justice. Elected student government representatives plan activities designed to promote school spirit and enhance the North Star student experience. These students engage in fundraising to support special activities such as our annual end-of-the year Field Day celebration. Our Buddy Program, established when third graders are partnered with sixth graders, allows friendships between younger students with an older friend, to foster mentoring over the three year term. Throughout the year, our Buddy Program hosts events, encouraging buddies to play and have lunch together, write pen-pal letters, and partake in other fun activities.

North Star Academy teachers feel highly supported. Through regular surveys and personal conversations with administration, their opinions are made known and things are put in place to provide the support they need. Teachers are given a release day each trimester to do planning work. A highly involved PTO provides the funds for school supplies and monthly luncheons, and any other school related needs. The parent organization holds an annual fundraiser dinner/celebration to raise the money needed to fund all these supports. Teachers are even provided with free tickets to this event! A weekly staff newsletter is used to provide information on upcoming events and to "shout out" teacher accomplishments.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The parents are truly our partners in helping to provide an enriched learning experience. Throughout the year they raise funds to enhance our core programs. This year they've raised roughly \$250,000. They fund many crucial things such as PE, Outreach, Enrichment, field trips and much more. Parents also volunteer in many ways. On any given day you might see parents on campus engaged in teaching classroom lessons in art, Marcy Cook math tiles, or Project Cornerstone. They also volunteer to drive on field trips, organize and produce our school musical, and support specialized days where students experience cultures from around the world such as Egypt day, Gold Rush, and Renaissance Day. Even while doing this, they find time to take care of the staff by providing monthly luncheons, celebrating teacher appreciation week, and many other daily acts of kindness.

The school and the parent club have strong outreach programs to the parent community. Parents receive weekly newsletters from the principal and the parent club. Many events are listed in the newsletters and volunteer opportunities are advertised. This year the school has hired a Spanish-speaking office assistant to facilitate communication with parents who speak Spanish.

Several times a year the school sponsors parent education nights on different topics. This year we have focused on the social and emotional needs of students. Topics include: suicide prevention, anxiety and depression, and safe use of technology.

Once a year we hold special days to highlight different curriculum areas: Festival of Words, Festival of Numbers, etc. Students sign up for a variety of workshops, many taught by community volunteers. In the past, community members have run workshops on topics ranging from calligraphy to Shakespeare to Fibonacci numbers.

There is a strong outreach to our bilingual families as well. Parents of bilingual students is a group that meets regularly. Their focus is on helping the bilingual families adjust and become an integral part of our community. They sponsor activities like Family Game Night and informational meetings on topics such as how to use the parent portal and tips for communicating with teachers. They were instrumental in getting the funds allocated for the Spanish speaking office assistant.

We also run an after school program for the ELL students, providing support in understanding and completing classwork and homework. Home/school communication is enhanced because the teacher meets and greets the parents each day when they come to collect their students. Without our strong parent community, we would not be able to provide such a rich and well-rounded learning experience for our students.

3. Professional Development:

North Star has taken a personalized approach to our professional development. During the past four years we have worked with Dr. Richard Cash to better understand the needs of the advanced student. First, teachers worked with him to develop shared understanding and experimenting with common strategies. The emphasis was on depth and complexity using essential questions to drive instruction. As grade level teams, we developed common grade-appropriate universal essential questions on themes such as connectedness, change, and transformation. As a staff, we worked together to insure these themes built on each other in a logical progression through the grades. All instruction to date continues to tie back to these overarching big ideas. Content essential questions were developed by grade level to inquire how the theme is applied to content areas. Finally, lesson essential questions were developed to have students determine in what ways the information learned connects to the universal idea. In the last two years, Dr. Cash met one-on-one with the teachers to provide constructive criticism to improve instructional design. His instruction provided common language and practice across the grade levels.

After this foundation was established, teachers were given the opportunity to develop their own specializations. We utilize an on-site teacher coach who meets one-on-one with teachers to enhance strengths and identify growth areas. She leads full department and grade level release days where teachers have valuable time to dive deeply into subject areas. We have established a shared vision, we are unified in our policies and procedures, and teachers have a strong voice in our professional development choices. Our leadership team meets regularly to help determine professional development goals and opportunities for advancement. Each teacher has a professional development budget to spend on conferences or workshops specific to their content areas. Some have attended the National Science Conference, California Association for the Gifted Conference, and Google Summits. Two teachers attended the EdTechTeam California Summit in 2017, where they became Level I certified Google Educators. They shared their expertise with the staff.

The Redwood City School District Office of Staff Development has also played a large role in our staff's professional development. We have become leaders in our district, sharing our pathways with others to help their professional development. Several staff members have been trained by district staff to work as DLLs (Digital Lead Learners). They act as resources for teachers, helping to enhance their digital literacy.

4. School Leadership:

North Star uses a "Shared Leadership" model, which promotes student learning. This model ensures that all decisions have a student-based focus. The administration's motto is "Keep Calm and Do what is Best for Students." Students are at the center of every decision that gets made on campus. We have a variety of groups that contribute to decision-making. The administrative team is made up of a Principal, halftime

Assistant Principal, Teacher Coach and Outreach Counselor. We have weekly meetings with our support team to address any specific student concerns. These meetings are an important time to debrief the various stakeholders' viewpoints.

We have a representative leadership team with teaching staff from each grade level. This team meets every two weeks to discuss policies, procedures, program implementation and resources. Their job is to come to meetings with information from their grade level teams, and to report back. School wide initiatives and decisions are discussed and input is shared from this group. For example, it was this group that created the professional development goals and guidelines. We focus on data from student learning to make decisions about next steps.

Site Council is another decision making body. This group is comprised of parents, teaching and classified staff as well as the administration, and meets monthly. This is the formal body that makes decisions about how money is spent, and formalizes safety and school improvement plans. Through group discussions and student surveys they look at data to identify areas of need from the students point of view. They support parent information nights, communicate school priorities, and have a strong voice in students' experiences at North Star

For the students, we have a Leadership/ Student Council class that meets four days per week during the enrichment period. Students participate in small committees while developing skills in communication, collaboration, event-planning, fundraising, and the fine art of compromise. They give input directly to the administration and work as a team to bring the student voice to all stakeholders. Student Council members participate in panel discussions for parents, write sections of our Parent/Student handbook, and meet with other school leadership groups to express ideas and concerns. Input from student leaders is highly valued by all parties.

Each stakeholder's voice is heard and valued. By using the shared leadership model, we are able to come to clear, productive decisions in which everyone is invested.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The single-most influential instructional practice in our school's success is student choice. Students at North Star Academy are encouraged to voice their choice in a variety of ways, which gives them a sense of ownership over their personalized academic paths.

Students are given opportunities throughout the school year to pursue particular areas of interest. Our students create projects, allowing them to delve deeply into a specific area. The topic is usually specified by the teacher, but the students choose what the content will be. In the past, students have chosen to research tools used by California Natives, learned about the lives of individuals who lived during the Renaissance, explained their understanding of the word "freedom," and re-enacted the Constitutional Convention. They also choose how to present that information in a public and meaningful way, such as utilizing dramatic portrayals, constructing models, producing Google Slide decks, and developing public awareness campaigns.

During the year, students register for a variety of enrichment classes. These classes go beyond the normal academic subjects, by incorporating basic principles of a number of those subjects as well. Students choose three classes from a list and are enrolled in one of them. They value being able to choose a class that means something to them instead of having every class assigned for them.

Spring conferences are student-led. Students are given the chance to select and showcase their best work in a portfolio for each subject to their parents and teachers. Teachers encourage students to be honest about where they have succeeded and where they need to focus more attention to improve or where they need further assistance due to lack of understanding. Students exit the conference with a sense of pride and accomplishment knowing their teachers and parent(s) have seen their work from the student's point of view. Students' experience culminates with the 20% project in 8th grade. Students are allocated 20% of their class time to pursue projects based on their individual passions. Projects have ranged from students creating hoverboards, to outreach for earthquake safety to designing elementary math lessons. They are evaluated on their ability to apply what they have learned at school to making their mark on the world.

Choice is vital to the success of the North Star academic structure and our school culture. It allows students to take ownership of their academic success and bring meaning to their path in life.