

U.S. Department of Education
2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Yarmouth Elementary School
 (As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 121 McCartney Street
 (If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

Yarmouth ME 04096-8155
 City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Cumberland County

Telephone (207) 846-3391 Fax (207) 846-2330

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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. Andrew Dolloff E-mail andrew_dolloff@yarmouthschools.org
 (Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Yarmouth Schools Tel. (207) 846-5586

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. Jeanne Rapone
 (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

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):
- 2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 4 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	50	51	101
3	66	56	122
4	63	69	132
5	0	0	0
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
Total Students	179	176	355

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 3 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 88 % White
 - 5 % 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: 3%

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	9
(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)]	9
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	355
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.03
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

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

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Arabic, Russian, French-based Creole, Spanish, Castilian, Indi, Arabic, French, Kinyarwanda

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 10 %
Total number students who qualify: 35

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %
37 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>5</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>6</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>15</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>9</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</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: 1
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.	17
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	17
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	11
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 21:1

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	96%	97%	97%	97%	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.

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

To empower all students to create fulfilling lives in a changing 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

The town of Yarmouth is located on the coast of Maine, just north of Portland, Maine’s largest city. Yarmouth was settled in 1636 and incorporated as a Town 1849. With a population of approximately 8,350 people, our town covers 23 square miles. The median household income is about \$74,000. With above average wealth and housing levels, the per capita growth in Yarmouth outpaces that of the State. Our town's proximity to the Atlantic Ocean and its location on the banks of the Royal River, which empties into Casco Bay less than a mile away, makes it a prime location as a harbor.

Yarmouth has a local harbor, indoor and outdoor ice skating facilities, medical centers, hiking and biking trails, commercial development and several small shops and restaurants. Main Street, with a combination of old homes and small businesses, is referred to as the “village” where students safely walk and bike. Yarmouth residents contribute their time and efforts to make it a warm and welcoming community, thus exemplifying our motto, “Our Latchstring Always Out.” The town welcomes over 120,000 visitors each summer to the annual “Yarmouth Clam Festival” that is well known throughout New England. Our schools reflect this same investment in the community.

Approximately 20% of our town’s population consists of school-age children. Our school district enrollment has grown from approximately 1,400 students K-12 in 2014 to 1,640 at present. The population continues to grow as our town anticipates a district-wide increase of 300 students by 2028. While Yarmouth has historically been relatively homogenous, that is slowly beginning to change as southern Maine is growing in cultural diversity.

Yarmouth public schools are governed by a single municipality. Our school board is made up of seven members and two student representatives from Yarmouth High School. Our students attend the Yarmouth schools in a four-building configuration: primary (grades K and one), elementary (grades 2, 3 and 4), middle school (grades 5-8) and high school (9-12). Three of the four schools are within walking distance of one another and the administrative offices. Our district’s graduation rate is consistently above 90% and our proficiency rates on state assessments are consistently among the top schools in Maine, above 85%.

Yarmouth school’s mission statement, “Empowering All Students to Create Fulfilling Lives in a Changing World” is what drives our work with all learners on a daily basis. The 358 students at Yarmouth Elementary School focus on the core values: fairness, citizenship, respect, and caring. Students help set school-wide goals with the principal each fall, providing ownership and voice in the school. The core values are reinforced consistently by faculty and staff throughout the school. We inspire our students to embrace the tenets of our Responsive Classroom programming while promoting a positive school climate and culture. One result of these efforts is that fewer than 5% of students have more than one office discipline referral each year.

Faculty and staff are committed to both academic excellence and each child’s social, emotional, and physical health. Staff ensure a safe and secure learning environment. Forging strong and authentic relationships with students and families is a priority. Our comprehensive guidance curriculum empowers students to be self-advocates while simultaneously supporting one another in learning. Student play and movement are strategically embedded within our daily schedule, and character building is a priority in all grade levels.

Our community strongly supports public education. Many parents, students, and community members volunteer to support our schools. Our K-8 PTO actively fundraises to support educational activities. The Yarmouth Education Foundation promotes educational excellence by generating independent funding for innovative educational projects and initiatives that fall outside the standard budget and support the curriculum.

The Building Leadership Team meets monthly to facilitate collaborative leadership and ownership in the school. Our teachers work in grade level teams, led by team leaders, with a common weekly meeting time. Teachers are committed to improving through professional learning, teamwork, goal setting and ongoing

embedded professional development. Student learning is a shared responsibility, and the focus of each team's work- with special attention to the Common Core State Standards.

Teachers use classroom practices that cultivate a growth mindset, foster student voice and choice, differentiate, and hold students to clear and rigorous learning outcomes. Teachers have studied and implemented the workshop model of instruction, leading to marked improvements in student reading, writing, and math. Students have rich and diverse learning opportunities; art, music (with the addition of chorus and band in grade 4), and library skills are part of every child's learning, every year. Our RTI (Response to Intervention) process monitors all students to support any academic and behavioral limitations of our students. We have high attendance and academic performance rates in great part due to these systems and structures.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

At Yarmouth Elementary School we know that learners have different needs at different times to progress through our curricula; therefore, teachers remain open, responsive and flexible. Four key questions drive our programming. What do we want each student to learn? How will we know when each student has learned it? How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning? How will we deepen the learning for each student? Teachers plan and pace instruction similarly to ensure continuity of instruction in each grade. All students receive core instruction in language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. Additional support in reading and mathematics is offered to students identified through our RTI process.

Math and Literacy Lead Teachers coordinate instruction to ensure the common learning experiences of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Our Literacy Lead collaborates with classroom teachers in professional development based on the workshop model which differentiates instruction for students. Our Math Lead teacher meets with teachers to review instructional strategies for specific content, provides professional development around differentiation, and supports extension activities and remediation. Both Lead Teachers meet with small groups of students needing additional support to build foundational skills.

Good instruction supported practice and continual assessment are essential within our reading workshop framework. Teachers plan instruction to develop readers who love to read; read often, voluntarily and for multiple purposes; and think critically about what they read. “Just right” texts that offer challenges and opportunities for problem-solving are chosen to help students expand their strategies with the goal of reading independently. The workshop format gives students tools for exploring and comprehending different genres, authors, and texts. Students learn to make connections with prior knowledge and previously read texts and ask questions to clarify comprehension. They acquire foundational skills through a focus on the analysis of plot, setting, characterization, point of view, conflict, and theme via a variety of genres. They use questioning techniques to improve their response to reading skills. We put a strong value on independent reading to foster strength and stamina.

We have a school-wide approach to supporting writers’ development across all grades. Students develop awareness of the importance of details, citing evidence and making claims both verbally and in writing. Writing workshop begins with a mini-lesson followed by time to write for an authentic purpose. Students conference with peers and/or the teacher and then revise and edit their written piece. Flexible strategy groups work with the teacher on specific areas of growth. Students share their finished pieces with an audience.

We prepare students with mathematical skills that include problem-solving and higher-order thinking skills to process complex information and multiple data sources. Students learn mathematical reasoning, and instruction is designed to provide repeated exposures to mathematical concepts and skills. Students are taught to learn math first at the intuitive level, then the concrete/pictorial, next to the abstract, and finally the level of communication. We use hands-on materials to allow students to explore mathematical concepts at the concrete level before moving on to algorithms. Students engage in games and verbal activities to practice basic computation skills. We offer multiple strategies to accommodate different learning styles. Group work is an integral part of mathematics learning, and students share their thinking with others.

We are committed to engaging students with inquiry as they work to meet the Next Generation Science Standards. A variety of units from physical, life and earth science expose students to the scientific and engineering practices and crosscutting concepts of the standards. Digital resources, supplemental print, and hands-on activities foster both concrete knowledge development and higher order thinking. The use of science notebooks in all grades has improved inquiry, scientific thinking, and overall student writing. The scientific investigations, engineering challenges, and claim-evidence-reasoning assessments increase student engagement and are easily adapted to meet personal learning styles. Students benefit from making observations and conducting experiments in our school gardens and surrounding community.

Our Social Studies program is designed to develop an understanding of key concepts in the disciplines of geography, history, civics, and economics; skills in research and investigation; and engagement with an authentic application of knowledge and skills. Teachers integrate Social Studies learning with informational text reading, science, and informational or argument writing. Over their time in elementary school, students learn about civic organization, government, and law. Students also study local, state and national history and geography.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Our students participate in art, music, library, physical education and school counseling classes each week for 50 minutes. In addition, students access all of our specialists once per week for one hour on a rotating basis throughout the year and in smaller settings as appropriate. Our programs focus on educating the whole child and ensuring that students have the tools, skills, and experiences they need to be confident and successful both in and out of school.

The overarching goal of Visual Arts at YES is to empower all students to develop and demonstrate visual literacy skills through a spiraling curriculum that builds from year to year. This is accomplished by teaching and practicing basic skills of seeing, drawing and creating; learning and using art vocabulary and using technology as a tool to, among other things, expose students to artists from the past as well as contemporary artists. Students are constantly aware that making art is a transformative act of creative problem solving with infinite solutions. Many lessons emphasize the process of experimentation and discovery through mistakes so that a growth mindset is woven into the curricular goals. Throughout the year students have cross-curricular lessons in multicultural arts, science/art connections, and basic handwork. Students engage in fieldwork at local art museums to foster verbal and written visual literacy skills.

All students are musicians at YES. The music curriculum draws from multiple teaching methodologies and is presented in a hands-on, active format. Musicians spend their time in singing, playing instruments, moving, creating original music and learning to communicate through written music notation. They have access to a variety of tools for thinking in sound, including Orff barred instruments, ukuleles, recorders, iPads and handheld percussion instruments. In addition to their general music classes, grade four students can choose to participate in Band, Chorus and/or Orff Ensemble. The vast majority of grade four students choose to participate in at least one of our performing ensembles, many of them choosing to participate in two or all three.

The library is staffed with one full-time Library Media Specialist. There are a wide variety of books and resources that satisfy free-choice reading interests for pleasure as well as assigned school work. It is open and available to students throughout the day, and Library Appreciation, Reading for Personal Growth, and the Inquiry Process/Research Skills are taught during the students' weekly library class. Students have access to a number of digital sources. Library and Information Literacy Standards are based on the belief that students and staff are effective, ethical users of ideas, resources, and information.

Physical education provides students with developmentally-appropriate movement experiences. The goal is to empower our learners to gain the skills, knowledge, and habits necessary for building and enjoying the benefits of healthy and active futures. The program is based on a progression of learning opportunities that maximize success for all students. Learning outcomes are defined in the areas of physical fitness, fundamental motor skills, and personal and social interaction skills. Health classes in grade two and three focus on nutrition, cardiovascular health and emotional and social health.

The school counselor is an integral part of the school and works closely with students, teachers, parents, and administrators to meet student needs. The school counselor provides individual and group counseling services. Group topics include social skills, changing families and zones of regulation. The school counselor teaches weekly guidance classes to all students. Classroom guidance topics focus on academic, career and personal-social development. The school counselor coordinates services with outside agencies and facilitates the development of positive student self-concept, the development of positive relationships with others, and the awareness of person.

Students and teachers use technology as a tool to support essential learning in all subject areas. Activities include writing and publishing, mathematical practice and building conceptual understanding, online research for science and social studies topics, and creation of multimedia presentations for various audiences. Students have access to iPad devices in all grades. Professional development focuses on empowering students to design, show and share their learning. Teachers meet with the technology integrator on a regular basis to integrate innovative instructional practices. All teachers are challenged to utilize technological tools to enhance instruction in all curricular areas. Administrators, teachers, and students use their devices to collaborate, share and reflect on the work being done regularly. We seek to keep pace with the rapidly changing innovations in technology in our classrooms.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Our students are taught using research-based instructional approaches, methods, interventions, and assessments. Students are exposed to numerous ways of learning so that all children have opportunities for growth. We implement the Response to Intervention Model where there are tiers of instruction. Students move through the tiered levels based on specific need.

Tier One takes place in classrooms where all students move through the core curriculum. It is the daily instruction, best practice, support, small group work, differentiation opportunities, and extensions that are available to each learner. Students are assessed on a periodic basis to identify strengths and challenges. Teachers document progress and patterns developing with certain students who need repeated re-teaching or additional attention for understanding. Classroom teachers inform parents/guardians of student progress and any particular concerns.

A student is referred to the Child Study Team (CST) when expected progress is not made in academic areas. The Child Study Team (CST) is a group of professionals that meet once a week to share perspectives, expertise, and resources to ensure the success of all students. The team considers performance data, teacher anecdotal records and classroom work samples to determine what specific interventions are needed for individual student success. An intervention plan is developed based on a given student's specific needs.

All students participate in a Universal Screener for academics (NWEA - MAP - Benchmark Assessment System along with diagnostic tools) and externalized/internalized social behavior (Student Risk Screening Scale) during the year. Grade three and four students also take the Maine Educational Assessment (MEA) once a year. Literacy and Math Lead Teachers scrutinize common assessment data for developing trends. Data is reviewed to determine the impact on instructional practices and targeted interventions are designed and implemented.

Students are validated below the 30th percentile for RTI support. Those students who fall below the 20th percentile, as well as some students between the 20th and 30th percentile, are then offered Tier Two level specific intervention instruction that addresses targeted areas of concern. Students who receive Tier Two level support are monitored with data and decisions are made about the size, frequency, and duration of the necessary interventions being provided. Parents/guardians are provided progress monitoring information. If the student does not make expected progress within a determined time frame, he or/she may be recommended for more intensive instruction. This is Tier Three of our support services. At this level, a student may be referred for formal special education testing. Students who access Tier Three interventions are typically on an IEP or a very intensive RTI plan.

Students extend their learning through math and literacy enrichment activities. The top 3-5% of fourth graders, identified as gifted by test scores, portfolios and recommendations, have a class once a week with the Talents teachers. Students identified as having the highest need for regular enrichment participate in Communications (literacy) or Think Lab (mathematics). Talents teachers also work with whole grade levels throughout the year, providing enrichment and differentiation activities. They consult with teachers and offer extensions for high performing students in the classrooms for greater enrichment.

Through differentiated instruction, systematic progress monitoring, and meaningful instructional intervention practices we continue to build on high performing levels of achievement.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The classroom structures and school culture initiatives at our school empower and motivate students to become active learners in their environment. Through the Writers, Readers, and Math workshop models our students are offered differentiated learning opportunities. Engaging Science, Social Studies, Technology, and Unified Arts offerings allow for varied interests to be explored. Students celebrate their strengths and set their own growth goals in all content areas using reflective practice. Furthermore, our school culture embraces Carol Dweck’s growth mindset model. Instead of saying “I give up”, students are taught to think “I’ll use some of the strategies we’ve learned.”

Our core values of respect, caring, fairness and citizenship live and breathe through the Responsive Classroom practices in every classroom on a daily basis. This approach emphasizes social, emotional, and academic growth and consists of practical strategies for helping students build academic and social-emotional skills. Celebrations for citizenship and academics take place in classrooms throughout the school on an ongoing basis. Every month we hold a school-wide community meeting with a different theme related to our core values. Our town and school mascot “Steamer the Clam” attends and leads the school in celebrating core values.

The school counselor teaches comprehensive lessons to all grade levels and provides emotional/social support through group and individual work with students. Along with the school social worker they work with community businesses and social agencies year round to ensure that families have food, clothing, heat, and other necessities so that students can come to school ready to learn.

Our staff knows that they are highly valued for the work that they do. We have collaborative processes built into our structures, beginning with a Building Leadership Team that allows for staff voice and ownership in curricular and school culture initiatives. Our staff meetings begin with a recognition where colleagues voice gratitude and appreciation towards one another. The ownership and authentic relationships that exist at our school support a positive culture that results in a performance investment for all staff. Our school has been described as “happy and supportive” and we believe it is because our staff and students are all known, valued and treasured.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

We share our school vision, learning initiatives, successes and challenges with both our families and community members to build an honest and open partnership of trust.

Parents are kept well informed of their child’s learning and classroom needs through parent-teacher-student conferences throughout the year. Special educators and/or lead teachers may join the classroom teachers for our parent conferences. Other ongoing information includes informational events, teacher emails, blogs, websites, classroom newsletters and a variety of specialized reports such as Response to Intervention, Gifted and Talented, and Special Education updates. Students create a digital portfolio that empowers them to independently document what they are learning at school through photos, videos, drawings, text notes, and links. Parents can access and interact with this portfolio daily.

Our parents are highly involved in our school whether it is volunteering in their child’s classroom, helping in the lunchroom, or chaperoning field trips. Throughout the school year, teachers host learning celebrations that include publishing parties for finished written work and Readers’ Theater performances. Our parents also receive school-wide news through principal newsletters, updated school and district web pages, Board reports, and Twitter feeds.

To welcome and connect with our growing international population, our English Second Language (ESL) instructors organize an annual “International Potluck” with games, food, and fun as the main focus. This event and ongoing outreach help to build community amongst all races and cultures in our town and school

community.

Community partnerships also greatly benefit our students' growth and school success. Every Wednesday morning our "Clipper Buddies," students from Yarmouth High School, spend time volunteering and mentoring students in need of social/emotional support. Our PTO works with us to promote whole school and community events, sponsoring a great deal of our fieldwork in the surrounding community. The Yarmouth Education Foundation works closely with our staff to fund innovative projects that enhance learning for our students such as STEM initiatives that are integrated into our curriculum.

3. Professional Development:

Katie Haycock summarizes the research on the impact of the quality of instruction on student achievement in a succinct phrase: "Good teaching matters... a lot." Researchers have repeatedly cited the quality of teaching as the most important factor affecting student learning.

Each school year professional development time is devoted to particular areas of our district mission to "empower" all students in "creating fulfilling lives in a changing world." This year our focus is on differentiated instruction, technology, and behavior support, learning and examining how we can improve our practices to empower students. We utilize outside learning and internal resources to keep moving forward in our growth as ongoing professional learners.

Based on current research we believe that the best way to improve the effectiveness of individual educators is to develop a results-oriented, collaborative culture which will build the collective capacity of our staff to fulfill the purpose and priorities of the district. This emphasis on collective capacity reaffirms the importance of the individual teacher by creating conditions that promote ongoing job-embedded professional learning.

The most important criterion for teacher teams is their shared responsibility for student learning. We agree with Jonathan Saphier when he says, "What distinguishes professional learning communities from support groups where teachers mainly share ideas and offer encouragement is their critical stance and commitment to inquiry. Teachers ask questions, invite colleagues to review their teaching and their students' learning, and hold out ideas for discussion and debate."

Staff are organized into teams, by grade level, instructional support or unified arts. In addition to the weekly team meetings, ninety minutes every Monday afternoon is devoted to professional development time. This time allows teachers to build momentum and go deeper into their professional development work.

This year our staff has spent time learning about new classroom management strategies that truly empower students and build skills. Our community believes that "kids do well if they can," not, "kids do well if they want to." Based on the work of Dr. Ross Greene, our staff receives support in Collaborative and Proactive Solutions, a model in which teachers problem solve with students in a non-adversarial manner that builds rapport and strong, authentic relationships.

By working collaboratively teachers will continue to sharpen their professional skills and make sure that our practices align with our vision of student empowerment.

4. School Leadership:

According to Heifetz and Linsky in *Leadership on the Line*, "one of the distinguishing qualities of successful people who lead in any field is the emphasis they place on personal relationships." In Yarmouth, we pay particular attention to a culture that fosters the nature and quality of the connections people have with one another. We know from experience that these relationships are essential factors in moving forward for improved student achievement.

The seven building administrators serve on the District's Leadership Team, which is led by the

Superintendent of Schools. The “DLT” meets twice a month to discuss policy, curriculum, assessment data, supervision and evaluation, staffing, building and community updates, hold text-based discussions and review budgets. We are a collaborative and effective team which is demonstrated by our trust, respect, and support of one another.

Building principals are viewed as the learning and school culture leaders who are responsible for every aspect of the daily operation of each building. Two important parts of the principals’ duties are the curricula and the supervision and evaluation of the teachers. All teachers are observed through a collaborative process with the principal. This process involves several mini-observations and follow up conversations that facilitate reflective thinking. Teachers work closely with the principal on maintaining professional evaluation portfolios that include collaborative goal setting for professional and student achievement growth. These are reviewed annually. Building principals attend team meetings, professional development meetings, and any meeting regarding student progress.

However, the principal is just one of the leaders in the building. We believe in leadership density to support our common mission. Classroom teachers are organized by grade level teams and the Unified Arts. Teacher leaders guide grade level and professional learning teams.

An instructional strategist (who oversees RtI and Special Education) and our two content lead teachers work closely with the administration and staff. These leaders meet with building and district administrators to set goals, reflect on progress, troubleshoot challenges and develop leadership. Leaders develop plans related not only to matters of management but also to curriculum and instruction with a lens of what is best for students. They guide their teams in professional learning, analysis of student work, lesson study and unit planning.

Each teacher leader offers unique talents, and we are better because we thoughtfully utilize and appreciate each leader’s gifts. We empower teachers to take on formal and informal leadership roles. We embrace leadership with integrity, trust, respect and a commitment to excellence. This approach is modeled throughout our school and students and staff bring these principles to life with their daily actions.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

There are many practices in place to meet the challenge of our district vision of empowering all learners. The one practice that ensures ongoing improvement to meet this challenge is our continual work at improving instruction. Our belief is that if you are not “moving forward” then you are “moving backward.” The Professional Growth Model keeps our teachers and staff continually growing and learning as professional educators.

At the heart of our Professional Growth Model is a focus on SMART Goals to shape our efforts toward improving student learning. Goals that are “SMART” (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) foster a collaborative, outcome-based approach to improving instruction and learning. All members of the administrative and teaching staff develop goals each year. Staff members are provided with the resources needed to collaborate and implement thoughtful action plans.

Based on student outcomes staff identifies areas of need. From this analysis, two Student Achievement Goals are created. These goals identify standards for student growth and aim to improve academic achievement and/or students’ physical, social, emotional, and mental health. Baseline data is collected and analyzed and student growth goals are set. Teachers may set these goals individually, or as part of a team.

A Professional Growth SMART Goal is also developed by either an individual or a team. Teachers may choose to focus on any aspect of professional practice. Although the focus is on professional growth, impact on student learning is central to this work. This year one teacher's Professional Goal was: “To use the transformative power of the iPad to allow students to share knowledge in new and different ways, and to refine their communication through increased feedback.”

At his mid-year reflection, this teacher shared that: “Some of the things we have published on Seesaw so far include Book Creator books documenting a multiple-day investigation into erosion, letters were written to Martin Luther King and read aloud on Seesaw, two-day math multi-step problems with descriptions of why and how... I've been working on trying to use Seesaw as a platform to get students to share their thinking, and not just the product, in a way that is accessible to all. Parents and family members have the ability to comment on student work... We will be opening up student-to-student commenting soon, following a discussion of proper commenting etiquette and scaffolding of what makes a good comment, even if you disagree with someone.”

This example demonstrates how our professional development model facilitates a process that is vital in supporting empowerment, growth, and success for all learners at Yarmouth Elementary School.