

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):
- 6 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 8 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	39	55	94
1	47	65	112
2	48	44	92
3	53	35	88
4	52	60	112
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	239	259	498

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 40 % Asian
 - 12 % Black or African American
 - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 39 % White
 - 4 % 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: 7%

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	12
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	23
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	35
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	496
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 21 %
106 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Chinese, Spanish, Japanese, Tagalog, Kannada, Tamil, Arabic, Croatian/Servo-Croatian, Telugu, Albanian, Portuguese, Ga, Korean, Bengali, Malayalam, Gujarati, Marathi, German, Hindi, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Punjabi, Urdu, Macedonian, Nepali, Oriya, Wolof, Italian, Konkani, Russian

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 15 %
Total number students who qualify: 76

8. Students receiving special education services: 6 %
30 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>4</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>1</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>22</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.	24
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	13
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	2
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 14:1

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%	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 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 create and maintain an educational environment that supports academic achievement consistent with district, state, and national standards to meet all students' learning needs.

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

Village Oaks (VO) is a kindergarten through fourth grade school with approximately 500 students in Novi, Michigan. A northwest suburb of Detroit, Novi is conveniently located near thriving businesses and several very popular lakes, with easy access to major universities. Nestled within the Village Oaks subdivision amongst tree-lined streets and surrounded by local parks, Village Oaks Elementary School continues to be a source of pride for the community, which it has been serving since 1971.

Village Oaks is part of the highly acclaimed Novi Community School District (NCSD), which was recognized as the #1 school district in Michigan in 2018 by the National Council for Home Safety and Security. Along with the district's national honors, state of the art facilities, and commitment to academic excellence, NCSD celebrates the cultural diversity of the over 6,000 students it serves. Similarly, 63 different languages are represented throughout our district, with 31 of them present at VO.

The diverse student population at VO enriches the cultural experiences and broadens our community's global perspectives. Approximately 40% of our students are Asian American, 39% are White, 12% are Black or African, 5% are Hispanic or Latino, and 4% are two or more races. Twenty-one percent of the students at VO are English Language Learners (ELL). Six percent of the students at VO are considered economically disadvantaged and receive free or reduced lunch. Six percent of our students have active Individual Education Plans (IEP). The staff-to-student ratio at Village Oaks is about 14:1, which includes a wide range of educators.

As our school enjoys a strong multicultural presence, it's no surprise that our ELL population continues to grow. To embrace our diversity we host a "Diversity Day" where our entire school celebrates the cultures of students and families in our community. This year, we have recognized the many countries represented in our school by hanging individual countries' flags in our cafeteria. We have an ELL program, math/reading support, workshop model classrooms in math/reading instruction, and social work services, all designed to meet the individual needs of each student. We also assist our new parents via our school family liaison program, which hosts academic family nights to teach community members various instructional strategies. To support the needs of our economically disadvantaged students, we provide weekly backpacks with home goods in collaboration with our community churches.

At VO, we endeavor to promote high expectations for academics, meet the emotional well-being of our students, and celebrate positive behavior for all of our learners. As a learning community, we have built a culture of collaboration, leadership, and citizenship. To achieve these high expectations, our school community has committed to having "H.E.A.R.T." which is defined as: Have a growth mindset; Empathize and show kindness; Act responsibly; Respect everyone; Team up and collaborate.

All stakeholders at VO—teachers, students, principal, support personnel, and parents—work in partnership. Each grade level team is made up of 4-6 homerooms. Homeroom teachers collaborate with physical education, art, music, and media teachers to provide rich learning opportunities that develop the whole child. As a staff, we meet often to assess student data, which drives daily instruction throughout our building. The parent/teacher organization of Village Oaks is called "V.O.I.C.E." which stands for Village Oaks, Interested, Citizens, and Educators. VOICE coordinates community events and meets with the principal to discuss ways to support students' academic achievement.

At VO we believe leaders are made. We teach leadership traits to our students through the Leader in Me program. Additionally, every staff member is a part of a "Villa" which consists of students from each grade. During our school wide Villa meetings, we focus on specific leadership traits from Steven Covey's Seven Habits of Happy Kids. Along the same lines, we have created a "Student Lighthouse", a group of elected student leaders from each grade who organize and lead different programs to shape our positive school culture.

The mission of Village Oaks Elementary is to create and maintain an educational environment that supports academic achievement consistent with district, state, and national standards to meet all students' learning

needs. The end result of that mission—our vision, and that of our district as a whole—developing each student’s potential with a world-class education. In striving for success to that end, our motto is “Believe, Achieve, Succeed”...but really, it’s more than a motto: it is a mindset that permeates our school community, and has been fully embraced by all members of VO. The result is an engaged staff that collectively seeks to cultivate and reinforce a positive learning environment .

At Village Oaks, we believe:

That Village Oaks families are an integral part of the educational process.

That students deserve clear educational targets.

In celebrating success with our students.

Every child can be successful given the correct instruction.

Differences should be celebrated.

That assessment drives our instruction.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Novi Community School District (NCSD) uses the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics and the Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs) for Science and Social Studies. Village Oaks Elementary School (VO) serves its students and parents specifically by establishing an integrated and dynamic relationship between its curriculum, instruction, and assessment standards. Utilizing Atlas Rubicon (Atlas), a curriculum mapping program, grade level content leaders collaborate with related teachers to keep our (VO) curriculum focused. Teachers can view, document, and coordinate on all areas of curriculum, ensuring every student is receiving instruction on required Common Core Standards and Expectation. VO teachers use Atlas to share and implement best instructional practices to raise student achievement, which allows our teachers to plan and tailor instruction to meet the needs of individual students. In addition, we have an electronic data wall documenting all students' assessments. The NCSD webpage provides a link to guide parent(s) in accessing and understanding areas of curriculum their students are taught.

For ELA and math, we utilize the workshop approach to instruction, which includes providing a mini-lesson on a targeted objective for the day, an opportunity for students to attempt this skill in a guided format, then independently, with a follow up and share at the end of the session. As students are independently working, the classroom teacher meets with individual students and in small groups, based on need(s). Thus, teachers personalize instruction during these conferences to meet students where they are, with specific learning targets. Teachers utilize formative data to drive their instruction. This approach is commonly used throughout NCSD, as it allows for multiple re-teaching and differentiation opportunities.

VO students are instructed daily in reading and writing. Our teachers use the ELA units of study created by the Oakland Schools Literacy Team (OSLT); VO's Intermediate School District. The OSLT consists of consultants (with expertise in ELA), special education, and content-area literacy coaches. VO's Common Core aligned units of study enable teachers to deliver effective literacy instruction via reading and writing workshops and allows for whole-class instruction as well as setting individual student goals, with an emphasis on comprehension, accuracy, fluency, and expanding vocabulary.

VO utilizes spiraling concepts in the Everyday Mathematics curriculum which emphasizes, concrete, real life examples, repeated exposure to concepts and skills, and frequent practice of basic computation skills. To help more students achieve and to accommodate different learning styles, our teachers incorporate multiple methods, such as teaching academic games, using manipulatives, and intentionally teaching problem-solving strategies. Students are expected to verbally and in writing explain their reasoning to help them better understand the concepts, often documenting their work on SeeSaw (an online tool). Teachers supplement their mathematics instruction with online math resources that are aligned to units being taught and available to students at home and at school. Teachers, students, and parents can monitor student progress on these online programs.

VO teachers use a hands-on, inquiry-based science curriculum. Students are engaged in the four strands of science proficiency: physical, life, earth, inquiry, and technology. They are challenged to provide explanations for their reasoning in a science lab-type environment, promoting science and engineering practices. In addition, field trips to nature centers, assemblies and guest speakers support student learning.

VO utilizes a comprehensive K-12 social studies program. The Michigan Citizenship Collaborative Curriculum is aligned to the Michigan GLCEs. Our teachers use this curriculum to develop students' key social studies concepts and ideas including important vocabulary and relevant historical, geographic, political, and economics facts. This curriculum spirals each year and teachers build upon and develop students' background knowledge and critical thinking skills.

Throughout the school year, VO students demonstrate their understanding through a variety of formative and summative assessments; nationally normed, state, and district-wide common assessments. Teachers

utilize checklists, student-teacher conferences, data notebooks, thinking charts, learning progress documented in SeeSaw, student products, teacher-made assessments and various assignments to determine a student's understanding of concepts taught in a formative manner. This guides teachers' day-to-day instruction.

VO teachers regularly analyze data to determine next teaching points. This information may define specific groups of students for re-teaching and/or which students may need additional extensions, with specific concepts. Teachers utilize extensions or re-teaching opportunities that are listed in curriculum documents (e.g., Atlas). Teachers collaborate with grade level colleagues, support staff (Title 1 Math, special education, etc.) and building administration in efforts to further meet the diverse needs of our students.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

All VO students, kindergarten through 4th grade, participate in weekly visual art, vocal music, physical education, and library/media classes. Weekly, students attend one 55 minute session in each curriculum area with an additional 55 minute session once a month.

The instructional approach in each of these classes is similar to the core curricular subjects, while the set of skills in each of the classes are indicative of the specific discipline. VO media, visual arts and vocal music programs are based on the Michigan GLECs. Part of the media program is aligned with the Michigan Educational Technology Standards. As well, visual art is based upon National Core Arts Standards and Michigan Visual Arts Common Core Standards. VO's physical education is based on the Michigan Physical Education Standard and Benchmarks. All teachers collaboratively work to develop a sequential curriculum to ensure all students receive highly effective instruction.

VO's librarian/media specialist teaches students to interact and engage with technology which includes: iPads, Chromebooks, and interactive whiteboards. Our students practice basic library and keyboarding skills, research, problem solving, and critical thinking skills. All students increase their proficiency in looking up books, keyboarding, and project-based research skills.

In regards to technology, the VO media center houses a computer lab for student use in addition to computer carts for classroom use. Classroom teachers utilize this technology to teach students how to use SeeSaw and research sites. All students are provided a school email address and login for SeeSaw, a program which allows them to teleconference their work and classroom activities with teachers and family members. Guided by their classroom teacher, students utilize technology; e.g., research, documentation, and presentations.

In visual art, students are taught specific art concepts through creating various projects which the teacher designs after a specific artist who is associated with a particular skill. Students are introduced to the artist through text, visual presentations, videos and/or pictures. Each student independently tries the specific skill with other learned skills for a final project. The art teacher ends projects with an artist reflection related to personal growth and attainment of the learning target.

VO's vocal music teacher exposes students to a variety of cultural styles and musicians as well as teaches students basic music skills that will benefit them as they play instruments and participate in vocal music. Students are immersed in specific vocabulary terms associated with composing and analyzing various forms of music. Every grade level conducts a school-wide student assembly performance and an evening performance for their parents.

VO's physical education teacher empowers students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to sustain lifelong physical activity for a healthy, productive, and fulfilling life. Students experience a variety of physical activities that teach sportsmanship and leadership skills. By breaking the skills down into essential steps and having students try these skills in isolation, students participate in a variety of physical activities such as calisthenic stations, basketball, and roller skating. Students participate in a "Jump Rope for Heart" day to raise funds for the American Heart Association. These activities are imperative for students' success and enhance coordination (essential gross and fine motor skills), and overall physical fitness.

Play Works is an initiative VO instituted this year, in collaboration with all students and Assistant Coach Student Leaders, to create recess and play environments where every child can join in. All students are inspired to experience the social, emotional and physical benefits of play, specifically during their lunch recess time and reward recess times.

VO embraces the “Leader in Me” philosophy for character education. Based upon Sean Covey’s *The 7 Habits of Happy Kids*, it is an innovative, school-wide model teachers use to empower student to be school and community leaders in the 21st century. Our teachers integrate the leadership habits into daily classroom lessons and monthly small group meetings called “Villas” where a specific lesson is taught. A Villa is a group of 15-18 students from all grades. Once a month, each educator leads a Villa and teaches a common lesson about leadership. The student remains with their Villa educator throughout their tenure at VO.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

VO uses district, state, and classroom assessments to drive instruction and increase students achievement. We use an online data management warehouse, Atlas, where educators review data trends to make curricular decisions, set goals, determine professional development, and enhance student performance. Teachers use a variety of formative, summative, local, state, and national assessments to gather student performance results. One tool used is the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA-MAP). Students are assessed in the areas of reading, language usage, mathematics, and science using the MAP tests to determine instructional level and to measure academic growth in core areas from fall to spring and from year to year. Any student in the lowest forty percent from the fall MAP test is re-tested halfway through the year to monitor their academic progress. The MAP test is adaptive and gives one piece of a student’s entire assessment picture. This test focuses on every student’s academic growth and achievement.

VO staff create the conditions that support and lift all of our students, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, or initial ability. Teachers work to ensure each student makes at least one year’s growth in one year’s time. Teachers differentiate classroom instruction to meet the individual needs of students across the curriculum. One way differentiated instruction is implemented is the workshop model of instruction that allows for increased teaching points and re-teaching opportunities. Thus, interventions start in our classrooms where teachers recognize students with a need that is varied from other students, and implement strategies based on these needs as demonstrated through formative assessment. From these results, students may be regrouped. This ensures all students are working at their appropriate individualized level.

High ability learners benefit from VO’s workshop model. Teachers exercise the notion that the depth of understanding is essential as opposed to the breadth of knowledge. Teachers pose questions and problems to extend and deepen the thinking of all learners at their zone of proximal development. Our work in developing a culture of thinking implores students to excel in their divergent thinking by implementing visible thinking routines.

Depending on a student’s academic progress, an accommodations survey may be started to document what specific and different strategies were attempted and their degree of success. Parents are notified by the classroom teacher that their student is at risk of not meeting the standards and the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) process is started. A MTSS meeting can be requested throughout this process in order to further problem solve and determine next steps for the student which can include additional interventions with a specified timeline or special education testing, if deemed appropriate. Teachers monitor progress and make adjustments as necessary. The MTSS process ensures that every student’s individual needs are met through high quality instruction. With MTSS, there is a clear process based on data that helps teachers collaborate, implement, and monitor researched-based strategies to help struggling students. MTSS is an essential component for improving academic achievement for all learners.

Our staff works extensively with Marzano’s *Art and Science of Teaching* research. VO staff believe that providing students with clear learning targets and unit goals is essential for deeper understanding. Teachers help students to reflect on their academic progress toward the learning goal and use learning scales (rubrics) to determine their level of understanding.

Since VO is a Title I Targeted Assistance building, several intervention teachers provide additional instruction for students who qualify. The intervention staff and building principal look at school-wide assessment data to determine which students demonstrate the greatest need. Once that has been determined, students are selected through the criteria, as determined by various grant-funded interventions, for specific assistance. The parents, intervention teachers, and classroom teachers work together to determine the best model of delivery and which concepts need to be reinforced. These teams work to analyze student products and observational data to determine the next teaching points and to determine what growth has been achieved. Families are informed of VO's intervention programs through a meeting at the beginning of the year, conferences, and written communication.

VO employs interventionists to help support all students, especially students' with a specific need. These include: social worker, reading specialist, physical/occupational therapist, English Language Learner teacher and speech/language therapist. These professionals provide support to students as well as collaborate and provide support for staff and families.

VO educators synchronize a student's assessments, their teaching tools, VO's core curriculum and more to meet the diverse and individual academic needs of all students.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Our school climate and culture is one of a strong sense of family, community, leadership, and positive relationships. We provide a safe and supportive learning environment that facilitates student growth in academic, emotional, and social capacities.

Volunteer parents and community members are strong contributors to this climate of family. Village Oaks Interested Citizens and Educators (VOICE) coordinate many activities including: roller skating parties, Bingo nights, Spring Fling, swim party, and school wide assemblies. Parents and community members run a Math Club, Girls on the Run, Art Smart, Destination Imagination teams, and First Robotics Lego teams. Community members donate items for students in need, for example, Alpha Omega Alpha sorority donated food.

Educators promote a school-wide spirit of community through leadership programs such as Leader in Me and Villas that include anti-bullying and character building skills. Other programs include: Reading buddies, spirit weeks, March is Reading Month activities, Math Family Fun Nights, Halloween visit by students to a local nursing home, Diversity Day, and Problem Based Learning (PBL). Over thirty different countries' flags fly in our cafeteria and create a sense of belonging for students and community.

Students demonstrate their leadership skills by acknowledging fellow students' positive actions in person and through the morning announcements. Other demonstrations of community include saying the Pledge of Allegiance, filling hallways with students' thinking work and classroom learning, student performances, students' accomplishments outside of school, Student Lighthouse Leadership Team, School Bus Leaders, classroom rewards, and our Buddy Bench where students show kindness to other students that may need a friend.

VO educators are heralded for maintaining a family-like atmosphere in welcoming new staff members, students, and families. Teachers receive support through community surveys, informal feedback from our principal and each other through daily interactions, peer observations, and post evaluation conferences with the principal that reinforce positive actions and guidance in areas of difficulty. Staff feel comfortable approaching the principal and each other for support.

Teachers' contributions are recognized through grants given by the Novi Educational Foundation, Teacher of the Year Awards, VOICE teacher grants, and teacher appreciation activities. Teachers emotionally support others through social events such as Thursday morning bagels, school luncheons, and after-school social activities. Teachers build community and leadership by organizing in grade-level and cross-grade-level teams where they discuss issues, concerns, and best practices.

VO's educators, students, and community sponsor a variety of worthy community service projects; e.g. Gleaners' Food drives, Giving Warms the Heart. Thus, as a larger community, VO supports a strong sense of belonging for students, parents, and educators which results in our substantial student achievement.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

VO improves and serves the community it is embedded within by valuing its educators and parents as agents of student success. Thus, the most effective strategy that the VO staff uses to work with family members and community is building relationships. The staff demonstrates a level of care and understanding of our unique students' needs. Students love coming to school, are receptive to the lessons taught, and share that with their families (in person and via SeeSaw). Parents know that VO is not like the school they went to as a young student; it's a place where all members of the community have a voice and an extra level of care is used when working with all students. These relationships allow us to have courageous conversations with families with the best interest of students in mind. As we continue to foster these positive relationships between VO and the community, communication is more substantive and productive for our students. By

working together with students, parents, principal, staff, and community members to nurture and grow the entire child (mind, body and character), VO students will successfully reach their goals.

Social media and online sites are quick and frequent avenues for communicating learning in classrooms. The principal and staff members use Twitter to share learning in classrooms and around the school. The principal publishes a weekly VO News You Can Use newsletter, highlighting VO School Day Conversations, Compassion in Action, and updates on school wide activities. SeeSaw allows students and teachers to share the academic learning throughout the school day. MiStar is a district initiative to electronically share report cards with parents, quicker and easier, with assurance that parent(s) receive report cards. As families are made aware of classroom and school-wide happenings, they are more likely to ask questions, seek assistance, and promote learning that is essential to student success.

VO hosts meetings for families who are receiving intervention services to discuss the programs available to students. IEP team meetings are a positive, thoughtful, and personalized avenue to share with families the success of their students and strategies to continue that success (as are parent teacher conferences).

School-wide progress is shared through the state website and at VOICE meetings.

VO hosts a Celebration of Learning Day. Members of the VO community and surrounding areas are invited to experience a day at VO. Educators, business owners, and city officials are treated to an authentic experience. Students showcase their leadership skills and learning throughout the day such as thinking skills routines and other classroom learning practices.

3. Professional Development:

VO, along with NCSD, provides training that is relevant and aligned with district goals for our success. Our staff engages in ongoing professional development provided by the district and within our school. Many teachers enhance their learning through additional means via book studies, conferences, and specialized training.

NCSD targets professional development activities that are meaningful and relevant to all teachers to support growth and achievement. Before the student school year begins and over a three day span, NCSD provides a wide variety of choice professional development opportunities (e.g. Atlas, Project Based Learning, Marzano's Art and Science of Teaching).

During the school year, staff are provided with building professional development opportunities. VO's Instructional Coach facilitates learning labs, project based learning (PBL) guidance, book studies, model lessons targeted feedback, and professional guidance, particularly with PBL and deepening staff's Cultures of Thinking (Ron Ritchhart) learning. (Our cultures of thinking develops a growth mindset and helps students think beyond the walls of the classroom which support VO's mission statement.) District trained, formal mentors provide guidance for at least two years for non-tenured teachers to enhance their teaching practices. Intervention staff work with classroom teachers to observe particular students (with specific focus) and analyze various forms of data to determine next teaching points for these students. Some classroom teachers have recently taken a deeper leadership role in learning facilitation techniques by working with instructional coaches, in order to implement the strategies in a building-based cohort that is focusing on developing a culture of thinking. This year, our principal led a team of teachers to observe a school that has adopted the Culture of Thinking for a number of years. Upon the group's return, their observations were shared with the whole staff and further developed in our classrooms.

Another example of professional development includes vertical collaboration, where teachers meet in small groups with representatives from each grade level and non-classroom teachers, giving them the opportunity to share knowledge and ideas to help all students succeed. These vertical teams are often held during staff meetings and reinforce our belief that everyone in the building is responsible for the growth, development and achievement of each VO student.

Staff professional development (via internet or at staff meetings) are focused on the needs of our students,

e.g. a policeman discussing child abuse reporting, Alert Lockdown Inform Counter Evacuate (ALICE) training, tech training, Comprehensible Input, Making Thinking Visible, Federal Sexual Harassment Prevention training, and training in the most current county, state and national level initiatives.

4. School Leadership:

Our principal's leadership philosophy is built on community involvement, building positive relationships, and instilling leadership skills within the students. VO's principal elicits ideas from staff to make decisions that impact everyone, e.g., a staff member approached the principal about behavior initiatives which eventually evolved into our H.E.A.R.T. initiative. Through collaboration, collegiality, community, cooperation, and communication, VO's principal guides and nourishes our staff towards interdependence.

Our School Improvement Team is a shared-governance team that meets to communicate and discuss ideas, activities, and concerns as well as manage, monitor and implement Michigan's extensive school improvement process. The team is made up of grade level representatives who communicate vital information to their team members.

VO's staff embrace the Leader in Me leadership model by Stephen Covey which has a great impact on student success. It teaches students the skills to be in charge of their behavior and learning. All teachers, staff and support team members participate in the training. Thus, the school leadership requires a collaborative approach where all members of our school community have a valued and important voice.

Our student leaders, such as Lighthouse Leadership Team and Bus Leaders, discuss leadership opportunities and ideas for VO and work with staff to put those ideas into action.

The VOICE program engages parents in decision-making. VOICE provides extracurricular opportunities and works with staff and our principal to support curriculum.

VO's principal demonstrates leadership by being personally positive and a professional role model to students, parents, community and staff. He hosts weekly luncheons with classroom students to share experiences, ideas, and stories to support VO's leadership philosophy. VO's principal professionally supports staff when he promotes book studies related to current educational practices or research that might benefit a teacher's best practices and/or students. VO's principal provides opportunities for professional development above and beyond what is expected. He helps to set the tone for the day in our school as he greets each student when they are dropped off by a parent in the morning and picked up in the afternoon. This provides informal check-ins with parents and students. During our morning announcements, he shares his daily "Words of Wisdom". He celebrates every student's birthday by going to their classroom and leading their classmates in a rousing version of "Happy Birthday." He values and celebrates every child with a confidence in that child to successfully achieve as a whole child.

Our VO leaders have developed a shared, organization-wide understanding of who they are and what they are about. They are increasingly able to engage in ongoing, meaningful conversations that transform into a shared action on behalf of our students and mark progress toward our identified goals; successful student achievement.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The entire VO staff believe that building positive relationships with our students has a significant impact on students' personal behavior and academic success. With this as the foundation for our work, the Have a growth mindset; Empathize & show kindness; Act responsibly; Respect everyone; Team up & collaborate. (H.E.A.R.T. model) strategy for students' academic success was initiated.

From the principal's initial inspiration by *The Behavior Code*, by Jessica Minahan, a committee was formed to explore a possible school-wide adoption and personalization of initiatives in the book, which would also incorporate our best practices of the past.

The entire staff saw the value of the committee's ideas and agreed to institute the initiative, selecting the common language and consistent building-wide expectations related to student behavior. Our staff identified and voted on the values we hold most sacred at VO, for the whole child. Thus, H.E.A.R.T. was agreed upon as an acronym.

Next, our whole staff developed a matrix of student behavior expectations for each letter of the H.E.A.R.T. model, via discussions and votes. A subcommittee created grade level appropriate Reflection Sheets and spoke with their grade level colleagues about them.

Numerous supportive activities were developed in anticipation of a school assembly to kick-off our H.E.A.R.T. initiative. To help our students remember the H.E.A.R.T. model, a teacher created several chants. Our vocal music teacher worked with our students to learn the chant and actions.

The principal worked with our fourth grade teachers and students to create monthly videos of selected positive behaviors in action. These videos will be shown every month and be a part of our principal's electronic communications. In addition, our morning announcements were redesigned to recognize students who demonstrated a H.E.A.R.T. habit. These behaviors include: setting goals, never giving up, empathizing and showing kindness (for example if we see someone in need of a friend, invite them to join you), taking care of our things, and everyone working together.

As a learning community, we have built a culture of collaboration, leadership, and citizenship. This initiative demonstrates all of these principles starting with one person sharing the ideas in *The Behavior Code* and growing an influential program, due to the empowering leadership of our VO principal. Every VO staff member is invested in the development of our H.E.A.R.T. initiative, combining the knowledge from VO's past initiatives and culminating in the future academic and emotional success of every VO student. VO has H.E.A.R.T.