

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Debra Jean Hurst

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

Official School Name W.J. Gurganus Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 535 Hwy 70 West

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

Havelock NC 28532-9435  
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Craven County

Telephone (252) 444-5150

Fax (252) 444-5154

Web site/URL https://www.cravenk12.org/WJG

E-mail Debra.Hurst@cravenk12.org

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. Meghan Doyle

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail meghan.doyle@cravenk12.org

District Name Craven County Schools Tel. (252) 514-6300

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mr. David Hale

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 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

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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):
- 15 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 5 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 25 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
<b>PreK</b>	0	0	0
<b>K</b>	28	39	67
<b>1</b>	27	35	62
<b>2</b>	40	31	71
<b>3</b>	27	43	70
<b>4</b>	32	31	63
<b>5</b>	23	28	51
<b>6</b>	0	0	0
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	177	207	384

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 3 % Asian
  - 16 % Black or African American
  - 15 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 58 % White
  - 7 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2016 – 2017 school year: 23%

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

W J Gurganus has a high military population (54%) due to the connection with the Marine Corps Air Station located at Cherry Point. We lose and gain students due to military orders throughout the year.

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	44
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	40
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	84
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	366
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.23
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	23

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2%  
8 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 37%  
Total number students who qualify: 142

8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %  
29 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>3</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>1</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>11</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</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: 6
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, 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.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	0
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 20:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	95%	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.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

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

W J Gurganus Elementary School, united with families and the community, will prepare students to be lifelong learners in the 21st century through challenging, active and relevant learning experiences.

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

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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Havelock is home to the Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point. Most of the families around the Air Station are either Active Duty or civilian employees on base. Our current Military Impact Aid percentage is 49.3%. More than 53,000 people make-up the total Cherry Point related population, including active duty and retired Marines, civilian workforce and their families.

Construction of Gurganus Elementary was completed in 1992 and opened for grades Kindergarten through five that fall. The school is named after William Jesse Gurganus (WJG) who served as a principal in Craven County and also served on the Board of Education. Mr. Gurganus was a Havelock native and a strong advocate for public education. In 2012, Gurganus won the National US Cellular Calling all Communities award and received \$25,000 for new playground equipment. This campaign was a true testament of the dedication of our Gurganus families and community. Historically Gurganus has performed in the top 5% of schools in Craven County.

It is the goal of the WJG staff to prepare students to be well-rounded, positive, and productive members of society. Students are challenged daily academically, emotionally, physically, and socially.

Academically, every teacher at Gurganus strives to differentiate instruction and personalize learning so every student has their individual needs met. Differentiation occurs as a holistic school-wide model where students are continuously grouped and regrouped to provide optimal core instruction. This requires not only flexibility but a great deal of organizational trust in our building. Personalized learning is integrated into our learning system, capitalizing on a coordinated school health program which includes the “whole child” concept; ensuring each child’s social, emotional, academic, and physical well-being is a priority.

Emotionally our students are challenged each day to be positive role models for those around them. Our school practices the Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) model. Expectations are established and students strive to meet them each day. Our staff uses positive reinforcements throughout the day to ensure students are confident and proud of themselves. Having this type of positive support from both staff and students allows students to come to school with a good attitude towards learning. Having a proactive consistent behavior support system in place allows staff to focus on core instruction and whole child needs in lieu of a reactionary response to discipline. Students hold themselves accountable for behaviors towards each other and our staff. With the aid of a full time Military and Family Life Counselor (MFLC) position and the Military Interstate Children’s Compact (MIC3) guidelines, we support the successful transition of Military students transitioning in and out of our school.

Physical education (PE) and health and wellness activities are a part of each day at Gurganus. Our physical education teacher, in partnership with our school nurse, teach from the point of “Heart Smart.” They strive to teach students strategies and activities that lead our students to become healthy and active adults. Games taught during physical education classes are used during recess so students can continue to improve the skills we teach and develop a love for these activities as we encourage play. In addition, upper grade students have recess with our younger grade students allowing “the students” to become “the teacher expert” promoting positive self-esteem and leadership skills.

Throughout our school, students are encouraged to be role models. There are a myriad of opportunities for our students to lead in our buildings and extend those leadership skills beyond the walls of our school. Examples of leadership opportunities at Gurganus include Safety Patrol, New Student Ambassadors, Morning Greeters, and peer tutors. These opportunities enable students to interact with others; learning social skills and leadership skills necessary for success. The responsibilities that come with having jobs or leadership roles allows students to understand the importance and empowerment of positively interacting with others within school and the community. The PBIS model reinforces the concept of creating and maintaining a positive culture. Students are encouraged to carry these skills outside of the school building into their communities and homes.

Gurganus is very proud of our military connection. As a school that serves a significant number of children

with military parents, we have an obligation to those students that goes helps us to see our work as public educators come full circle. A strong military connection is capitalized upon and celebrated with our students. This relationship reinforces the importance of the military's connection to our community and our economic stability. Our school has been adopted by a squadron from Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point for the last three years. Every other week we have 10 – 15 Marines come to work with students in our STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) lab and in small groups on enrichment/intervention activities. In addition to the strong military presence, our school has a large "HUG" (Help Us Grow) Volunteer program. Teachers request volunteers to come in during the week to help students with one-on-one tutoring and enrichment activities. Our school is truly a reflection of the love, support, and patriotism of our community and it impacts our students positively every day.



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

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

WJ Gurganus Elementary's curriculum is a reflection of North Carolina's standard course of study (NCSCOS) and our local resources supporting that curriculum. Gurganus students receive integrated instruction in the four core subjects of Math, Reading, Science, and Social Studies daily. There are no textbooks used for any subjects. Our teachers use their expertise coupled with flexibility to deploy a personal philosophy of teaching and learning that is based on current research, high-quality practices, and established national standards. Employing this philosophy allows educators to continuously grow professionally while facilitating a challenging and personalized learning environment for our students.

In the area of Reading, all grade levels have implemented a Guided Reading framework in our literacy block. Students are grouped by levels that will allow them to meet success and show growth in reading fluency and comprehension. Upper grades complete several novel studies using various genres to ensure exposure to all types of literature. In the lower grades the DIBELS – Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills - is used to continually assess progress and adjust instruction to improve the reading skills of fluency, sound recognition, and comprehension. Intervention groups are run each day using one of three intervention research models: LLI – Level Learned Literacy, SPIRE – Specialized Program Individualizing Reading Excellence, and FCRR – Florida Center for Reading Research. These models provide instructional support in fluency, comprehension, and writing to meet individual learning needs. In addition, enrichment activities are provided 2 – 3 days a week for students needing acceleration. Writing is also incorporated daily in our literacy block. Student created textbooks are used in lieu of commercial textbooks which gives students personal ownership in the creation of content and connects the reading and writing experience.

In the area of Math, the NCSCOS is used for grades K-5. Students create math interactive textbooks to support their learning. Our school uses the Renaissance Accelerated Math for grades 3-5 which is a research based computer program that acts to supplement and reinforce standards taught. District benchmarks are systematically used to evaluate and adjust instructional practices and facilitate professional learning. Students in grades K-2 use Guided Math rotations for math instruction. As math standards are taught, typically at the beginning of each week, students rotate to centers throughout the week and apply essential concept(s). These centers utilize virtual and concrete manipulatives that allow teachers to address the personalized learning needs of each student. Various computer activities are used as supplemental resources for teachers and students to enhance and extend instruction.

Science in grades K,1 is taught in units with center rotations used as hands-on learning opportunities supporting the developmental learning modalities of children. Grades 2-5 use student-created interactive textbooks to study material. Our school has a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) Lab that is used weekly to conduct experiments and prove scientific hypotheses and problem solve real world applications. Flexible scheduling is used to allow maximum student access to the lab environment while allowing teachers flexibility to determine how, when, and where to facilitate science concept development. In addition, educators also incorporate virtual field trips to science labs and face-to-face field trips exposing students to real-life experiences and promoting global interdependence and connectivity.

Social Studies content is strongly integrated through our literacy block. Students in grades 2-5 use North Carolina Social Studies Weekly as their primary content delivery resource. This resource is specifically aligned to the NCSCOS. In the Weekly, a multitude of topics and activities are given to students to help enhance their understanding content area. Our students take field trips to various places in North Carolina that help bring the history to life. Field trips at our school are systemically chosen to directly align to grade level standards. Trips include visits to the State Capital for 4th grade, a visit to Colonial Tryon Palace for 1st grade, and a trip to Historic Fort Macon for our 5th graders as examples.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Our school believes that the arts are an integral part of forming a well-rounded whole student and instruction in the arts develop the creativity needed to facilitate student success. The arts are used to both reinforce and integrate an interdisciplinary approach to learning, as well as, a singular approach within their specific content.

All students participate in art weekly to help incorporate topics studied in class. Using the core teacher's instructional timelines, the art teacher connects the grade-level curriculum to the desired learning outcomes for art. Observed examples are students using geometric figures in art which helps reinforce geometry or artwork with various habitats created to help students understand the different biomes located around the Earth. Our fourth graders sketch the different lighthouses found in North Carolina and learn the history of our lighthouses while applying perspective, tone, and mood, etc. All grades are required to do written summaries about their final product. Students are encouraged to tell about their artistic inspiration and reasoning for the choices made in creating their final product. Artwork throughout the year is picked and displayed at our annual cultural night where students leading parents and guests on a gallery walk showcasing the work of all students in the school.

All students attend physical education each week with the PE teacher and have a 30-minute recess each day. Classroom teachers and the PE teachers work together to have organized activities during recess. Students are exposed to NCSCOS skills for common sports such as football, baseball, track, and soccer. These skills help students involved in recreation leagues or as they move to middle school. These activities develop self-confidence, sportsmanship, and support positive social emotional character traits. Rules and regulations are discussed in conjunction with the meaning teamwork. Students use technology such as heart rate monitors to learn about the importance of health and its impact on daily life. Healthy eating and sleeping habits are discussed so students know how they play a role in their everyday life. An annual field day commemorating health and wellness utilizes community partners such as our adopted military Marine Corps squadron and parents. During this event, students in grades K and 1st go through station rotations, while 2nd through 5th participate in friendly competitive events. We are proud that all grade levels voluntarily participate in the American Heart Association's Jump Rope for Heart. This participation demonstrates our school's beliefs about wellness, community partners, and civic responsibility. Girls in grades 3rd – 5th participate in the Girls on the Run program; a program run by teachers that develops self-esteem and builds lifelong habits of health.

Media/Technology is another weekly offering for students. Our coordinator establishes a foundational framework for digital literacy for all students. Students in grades 2-5 have one-to-one computer access. Grades 3-5 bring their Chrome books to the media center for specific lessons about internet safety, research, and evaluating social media. Grades K-2 learn about the importance of the internet, how to safely navigate, and its influence on our daily lives. Using tools such as virtual mapping, Coding, Connectivity applications, and gaming are examples of how our students use technology for learning. Although our school places emphasis on digital tools, students are exposed to various book genres in both digital and print format. Throughout the year, our Media/Technology coordinator works with our 4th and 5th grade students preparing them for the annual Battle of the Books (BOB) competition. This competition between all 15 elementary schools in our district allows our students to meet and network with other student readers from different backgrounds who share a common passion for reading and literature.

All students attend music class once a week where they begin to understand the different genres of music, history behind the music, and learn to read music. Music artists and their individual impact on history are studied. Musical instruments are systematically introduced at various grade spans. Early introduction of music continues the creative development of our students and strengthens the scholastic choral and instrumental music programs at our middle schools. Students in the upper grades are required to write about the music genre including the use of tone, pitch, etc. and the influence music has on society. They interpret lyrics for meaning and what the musician's purpose for writing the composition. Students in grades 4th and 5th audition for the All-County Chorus program and spend a day with a special professional guest musician.

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

Our school's methodology for all disciplines is a continual and repeatable cycle that capitalizes on the delicate balance of the interdependence between instructional methods which includes both teacher guided and student-selected interventions/enrichments, coupled with the continuous feed of an effective data and assessment system. This model not only drives our instructional practice for student learning outcomes, but drives teacher reflective practices and professional development as a continual improvement and investment in our teachers, facilitating better service.

This continuous learning model is supported by a master schedule that provides ninety-minute uninterrupted guided reading and guided math blocks. Literacy blocks are divided into vocabulary lessons, guided reading lessons, and writing lessons. Teachers recognize research suggests a strong vocabulary base is essential for academic success. Vocabulary is introduced with each new curriculum topic for all subjects. Word origin is discussed when introducing new vocabulary. Vocabulary is an integral part of daily classroom conversations which supports the understanding of the learning content. Writing is emphasized in all disciplines and helps students learn the importance of justifying their ideas based on facts, not subjective feelings. We use the co-teaching inclusion model with our Exceptional Children (EC) and Academically Intellectually Gifted (AIG) students in grades 3rd – 5th. The EC and AIG teacher come into the class to lend support and different point of views.

Using Education Value Added Assessment System (EVAAS), we holistically monitor our learning system for all achievement groups. Based on 2017 EVAAS data, all 3rd – 5th grade reading achievement groups “met” or “exceeded” the state growth average. EVAAS math data (assessed in grades 4th and 5th) shows a similar pattern with the exception of the highest achievement group for grade four (does not meet). Although this 4th grade growth pattern is similar across our district, our school breaks from the district pattern and “exceeds” in the highest achievement group grade five. In addition, all achievement groups for science (tested in only grade 5) “met” or “exceeded” for 2017.

To further ensure all students are progressing, our school has daily intervention/enrichment groups (Gator Groups). Initial placement is based on benchmarks from DIBELS and Aimsweb. Groups meet for 40 minutes daily. Groups are led by teachers, paraprofessionals, and the intervention specialist. Gator Groups start in October and run until May. Tier 3 students (highest priority) are placed in small groups (3 – 5 students) with the intervention specialist. The intervention specialist uses programs such as LLI, SPIRE, or FCRR to help fill instructional deficits. These students are progress monitored weekly. If students are not meeting with adequate success, a new intervention may be put into place. Tier 2 students (at-risk students) are placed in small intervention groups (7 – 10 students). Using guided reading/guided math helps gain strength in their reading comprehension, math computation/comprehension, and writing skills. Tier 1 students (all other students) are grouped by reading levels. Their groups may be 15 – 20 students. This fluid grouping ensures that all students grow. Regardless of tier placement, all instructional planning incorporates higher level questioning skills/activities and projects that challenge student thinking. Upper grade students identified for AIG receive enrichment in math and reading weekly by a certified AIG teacher. Depending on identification, students might receive services in both math and reading. Our AIG teacher serves students identified by teachers in grades K – 3rd with enrichment activities each week. This nurturing group is tracked through the 3rd grade where they are later tested to determine official eligibility. Teachers offer tutoring before and after school for any student whose parent/guardian or teacher recommends.

According to our 2017 End of Grade proficiency data, our school has a greater than ten point proficiency discrepancy in the following areas: Hispanic 3rd Reading (11.7), Educational Disadvantage Student (EDS) in Reading for grade 3 (10.9), and EDS for Reading grade 5 (11). In addition to our school's monitoring of achievement groups, our Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students, primarily Hispanic students, receive support from an LEP teacher at least once a week which is in addition to tiered services. Our EDS students are monitored within the achievement groups. Currently these discrepancies are lower than the district. Our school values the EVAAS growth model because it measures the effectiveness of our schools' learning system across achievement groups and subgroups compared to schools across our state. We consider both proficiency and growth for measuring success. Using proficiency scores only, does not afford our school the best option for analysis as cohort tracking is compromised by our mobility rate of 22.95%.

Teachers use district assessments to assess student's progress quarterly. The assessment data is used in professional learning communities and facilitates collaboration, shared ideas, and resources with teachers both within and outside of our school environment.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

As you walk in the doors of WJG, the first thing you see is our banner stating “WJ Gurganus: Where Every Student Matters.” Our student centered school believes that motivation is the key to our success. Teachers ensure that all students are motivated by being recognized some time during the year in either academically, non-academically, or both areas. Every student has the opportunity to shine. Academics are recognized daily, weekly, and at report card reporting periods. Grades and growth are celebrated for students. A student may not always be a straight “A” student, but they may show tremendous growth in an area, specific skill, or discipline which prompts us to celebrate that growth. Our students are celebrated in conjunction with our local Police Department for “Do the Right Thing.” This special award given to students by the police department motivates students to do the right thing. Students are spotlighted each week using student led criteria at the classroom level allowing them to be role models. Our PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) selects a “Gator of the Week” and spotlights our Gators in the main hallway bulletin board. Students serve as Ambassadors for our school. This honor allows them to greet guests and be buddies for new students. Upper grade students also act as tutors for lower grade students. This gives them a sense of leadership and reinforces the value of being a good role model. These examples of recognition encourage students to want to do their best.

The staff of WJG are valued and supported throughout the year. Teachers are valued and trusted as educational experts. Teachers share ideas and resources that are adding to the success of their students at staff meetings. Teachers are frequently asked to serve on district teams to help lead the way for change in our district. Teachers are sent to workshops throughout the year to give them new ideas and energize them with new resources. Teachers are asked to lead professional development in the building and showcase instructional and leadership skills. They are treated to a catered duty-free lunch once a month. Staff are recognized on their birthdays and on special events such as weddings, graduations for higher degrees, and the birth of children. These types of celebrations reinforce the sense of “family.” Each year we have a staff appreciation week where each day there is something special planned (gift cards, catered lunch and breakfast, goodie bags, off campus lunch hour). The administrative team monitors school climate by using the North Carolina Teacher’s Working Condition Survey (NCTWCS), the AdvancED ELEOT (Effective Learning Environment Observation Tool), teacher-student attendance rate, and Friday Exit Tickets for staff, which can be anonymous. This systematic monitoring is only one piece, but when coupled with relationships and processes, the result is a climate of continuous improvement.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

WJ Gurganus is a reflection of our community from the military students we serve to the community members who volunteer to support our students daily. Our school employs traditional family and community engagement activities and also seeks unique relationships to impact our school culture and students. Every quarter Gurganus hosts a Title I Family night. We have a make-and-take night for Math, Reading, and Science. Our most recent event served 296 parent/guardians. Families come and visit two different sessions in different grade levels. When parents/guardians leave at the end of the event they have a strategy to use at home and a free book. We have a huge volunteer program made up of parents and community members. Last year they recorded over 1,200 service hours within our school. The last three years we have been adopted by the MACS2 squadron from MCAS Cherry Point. These marines come in three to four times a month to work with our students in academic areas. They complete projects with them and act as mentors. The mayor of Havelock shows continuous support by coming in to discuss government with our 4th graders prior to their trip to the state capital. Parents and grandparents are a common everyday sight in our school, they are often seen in pods working with students in various subjects depending on the needs of the teacher and grade level. Local dentists come in and teach our second graders about the importance of proper dental hygiene. Different professionals (dentist, police officer, fireman, lawyer, Marines, veterinarian) from our community visit 1st graders and tell about the importance of their jobs in the community.

Our school holds a cultural night each May to showcase the talent of our students in the areas of art and music. Community members, School Board members, Central Service members, and parents are invited to see all the talent in our building. We also have a robust social media following which allows our community, families, and other stakeholders to keep up with our school (Facebook, School Webpage, and Twitter account). We have a Family Bingo night in January and an end of the year carnival event, "GatorFest." This event helps us end the year and celebrate all our successes. We have a very active PTO that coordinates events for our families throughout the year. They help us celebrate our students and staff. Our PTO reaches out to the community for support in the celebration of Staff Appreciation Week. Our media coordinator often hosts guest readers from the community to read to different grade levels. Our 5th grade has a local TV meteorologist come in and talk about weather and its impact on Eastern North Carolina. This strong and continuous connection between our school and community reinforces and unites our concept, "Every Student Matters."

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

Our teachers continuously seek out research based professional development on both the local and state level that is driven by student learning needs within a continuous improvement framework. The continuous improvement structure for professional learning is the professional learning community (PLC) in each grade and subject. The knowledge and skills gained in the PLC and, as a result of the work of the PLC, are shared through the same process used to identify the needs. This year, an analysis of our staff learning needs revealed that a refresher of the MTSS (Multi-tiered System of Supports) model would assist teachers in creating more effective core instruction and remedial supports. This refresher allowed both veteran and novice teachers to review standards, unpack them, and improve support for the process of regrouping students for effective instruction.

Teachers in grades K-5 also participated in Guided Reading professional development. This session enabled teachers to connect the theory of guided reading and the role it plays in a student's overall success in developing reading fluency and comprehension. Teachers were also grouped with teachers from across the district. This was a great opportunity to network and see how guided reading was being implemented in each school. A result of our analysis of student data, particularly our disaggregated sub-group performance, led our school to provide training on Higher Order Thinking (HOT) skills, differentiation, and personalized learning. In this PD we utilized our AIG, EC, Title I teacher and support staff to help understand the importance of these strategies in our classroom learning system. Teachers in the arts (PE, ART, Music) attend yearlong PLC meetings to facilitate the connection of the arts to core instruction.

Integrating digital learning professional development has also emerged from our professional learning community work as an ever growing and changing need. This was facilitated by eight teachers who were sent to NC TIES; a state conference for teachers by teachers to facilitate and support digital learning. Teachers spent two days with other teachers from across the state to see how more technology could be incorporated into the classroom and how digital learning could improve instructional delivery and impact student growth. Teachers came back and presented ideas and implementation timelines to their colleagues within the PLCs. Our teachers have two planning days built into our school calendar. During the all-day planning, district specialists come in provide training which included targeted assistance for improving instruction for our students with special needs in math. Strategies shared have been useful for all students, not just EC students. This planning day also incorporates the breakdown of data from benchmarks and assessments. This information helps teachers when creating lesson plans and adjusting interventions for the next 12 weeks. Our teachers come together systematically in individual grade levels, across grade levels, and as a whole school to improve the art and science of teaching, share experiences and expertise; living the daily work of professional learning to impact student learning.

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

WJ Gurganus is led by a principal and assistant principal. In addition, school leadership is supported by a school improvement team consisting of elected job-alike peers (certified and classified staff) and elected parents. The philosophy of school leadership is reflected in the school's positive climate and culture. The principal and assistant principal use the core values of the school to ensure that all staff members feel

valued and appreciated. The principal's primary belief is a staff that is valued and appreciated is more willing to come to work to value and appreciate our students. Enabling our teachers to be the classroom facilitates a sense of trust and collaboration in the school. Our teachers feel free to teach and be creative; assisting then in meeting their highest purpose. The principal creates a culture and climate that enables our teachers to work at the highest possible levels for our students. Administrators provide, support and monitor an effective instructional framework and provides resources so that all teachers are empowered as leaders to ensure students are successful. This is most clearly demonstrated as our school leaders empower experts in our building to make decisions.

The school has a leadership cabinet (school improvement team) with representation of all stakeholders, including parents, which is vital to ensure staff buy-in in the decision-making that impacts student learning. Within our cabinet, we celebrate our successes and acknowledge our failures and work hard to learn from both. Allowing staff ownership creates that positive culture and sense of trust which is vital to our building. Curriculum resources are discussed among the cabinet and grade level professional learning communities (PLCs) for input. Decisions, when possible, are made by a consensus with impact on student learning as our north star. Our continuous improvement cycle, Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA), is used to evaluate every process in the building and continuously improve our work. These decisions include instructional resources, professional development, budgetary decisions, school calendar, and school-wide schedules. Having a staff that feels valued and involved helps keep teacher turnover rates low each year (classroom teacher turnover rate 2016 – 2017, WJG 4.5%, District 18%). Leadership believes and acts that our people are the most valuable asset in our school from our students to the adults.

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

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The one defining attribute that separates our school from other schools is our history of continuous improvement founded on the Baldrige framework. The continuous improvement framework facilitates a supportive, honest school culture committed to improving for every person on campus. Within the plan-do-study-act framework learning from failure is equally important as learning from success. Our processes within the framework are fluid. They are continually being evaluated and adjusted to meet the ever changing and demanding learning needs of our students in our community and society. The success of our professional development, information analysis, and research based methodologies, are all “good”, but when placed in a culture which demonstrates daily a moral responsibility and value for all members, a dynamic learning environment for all is created. Our supportive continuous improvement culture fosters a dynamic learning environment where every student and adult in our school is important and is able to continually learn and grow.