

**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) [ ] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

Name of Principal Mr. Reese Ande

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

Official School Name Captain Johnston Blakely Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 4704 Blakely Avenue NE

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

Bainbridge Island WA 98110-2259  
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County\_\_

Telephone (206) 842-4752 Fax

Web site/URL https://www.bisd303.org/Domain/13 E-mail rande@bisd303.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\*Mr. Peter Bang-Knudsen  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail pbangknudsen@bisd303.org

District Name Bainbridge Island School District Tel. (206) 842-4714

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 Ms. Sheilia Jakubik  
(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):
- 4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 3 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 2 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 9 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>	37	28	65
<b>1</b>	42	29	71
<b>2</b>	43	35	78
<b>3</b>	40	35	75
<b>4</b>	44	36	80
<b>5</b>	0	0	0
<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>	206	163	369

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 2 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 85 % White
  - 8 % 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: 10%

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.

<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	20
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	13
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	33
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	342
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.10
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

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

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

Estonia, German, Korean, Russian, Romanian, Mandarin

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 6%  
Total number students who qualify: 23

8. Students receiving special education services: 14 %  
53 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>2</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>3</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>12</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>30</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: 8
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	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	15
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.	4
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 25:1

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	95%	95%	95%	94%	94%
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.

Staff, parents, and community work collaboratively to nurture and challenge each student to achieve their greatest potential and become active contributors in a global society. We appreciate and respect individual differences, and honor creativity and kindness.

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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Captain Johnston Blakely is a K-4 elementary school, built in 1965, and currently serves more than 365 students. Blakely is one of three neighborhood elementary schools in the Bainbridge Island School District. Located on an island in Puget Sound, a 35-minute ferry ride from downtown Seattle, Blakely is a destination for families seeking an exceptional education rooted in academic rigor, social and emotional learning, and playful exploration. At Blakely, the principal and staff believe each student should be actively engaged in the pursuit of academic excellence. Staff, parents, and the community work collaboratively to nurture and challenge each student to reach their greatest potential and become active contributors in a global society. We appreciate and respect individual differences and honor creativity and kindness.

Blakely's greatest assets are the staff, parents, and community volunteers who support children. Certificated and classified staff understand the incredible responsibility that comes with educating our youth. At Blakely, our teachers are highly trained, with 78 percent holding a degree of Masters or higher and having an average of 15 years teaching experience. We also have a number of staff who currently hold their National Board Certification, or are in the process of receiving it. Teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, office staff, and volunteers strive for excellence and never settle for mediocrity. Our unwavering commitment to growth and our evolution as professionals has resulted in our continued success as an elementary school. We have received the Washington State award for Overall Excellence each year since 2013.

The successful education of a young person is a challenging and complicated pursuit that can only be realized by growing a child's intellectual abilities in tandem with their social, emotional and physical health. Students who are safe, confident and willing to take risks improve their ability to reach their full potential and improve a teacher's ability to maximize growth. At Blakely, we have developed The Three R's, a behavior model that encourages students to be responsible, respectful, and reasonable. Each classroom teacher uses the development of these desirable traits as a common means to build an inclusive classroom culture in which differences are celebrated and honored. As a school, we focus on relationships through a school-wide positive behavior system called Positive Paws, character trait instruction, fall- intake conferences with parents, PTO-sponsored picnics, game nights, student-led leadership opportunities like the Kindness Club, class meetings, reading buddies, and after-school activities. Every student has a place, and every student has a voice.

Blakely provides a rigorous core academic experience in which students are challenged by lessons and activities that are cognitively complex. The staff embraced the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), seeing it as an opportunity to deepen our content knowledge and audit those practices, delivery models, and instructional strategies that were already in place. Over several years, we dedicated our Monday early-release time, learning improvement days, and common staff planning periods to developing fluency and a plan for implementation. To ensure our successful transition to the standards, we sought out a variety of rich resources, appropriate technology, and authentic assessments.

Blakely is a community of passionate adults with unanimity of purpose and shared vision for the future. We are strategic and relentless in supporting each child in his/her journey to academic, social, and emotional growth. Leadership and decisions are shared by all constituents and driven by data, both quantitative and qualitative. Blakely is a students-first community where the diverse needs of our children are met by trained professionals who plan for success. Solid core instruction, engaging and enriching supplementary content, early intervention strategies, positive relationships with our parents and administrators, and a true and pure love for children are the powerful factors that have allowed us to meet our aspirational goals for Blakely's students.

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

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

At Blakely, we have embraced a collective sense of responsibility and shared accountability for every one of our students. Helping our students master the CCSS at each grade level is our mission. Keeping students' future education in mind and preparing them to be college and career ready are drivers in our school's culture.

Our core curriculum is collaboratively designed to be engaging and accessible for all learners. Improved student learning is our number one priority. The staff is adept at making changes and understands that the teachers at an excellent school strive to innovate and imitate when it serves this goal.

Our staff is very mindful of the incredible power of narratives. We teach our children that there is much to learn in listening to the stories of others and there is danger in thinking that there is only one story for any group of people. Our staff believes that the greatest gift we can give our students is the understanding that they can write their own stories. We want to pass on our genuine passion for reading and writing to our children. To this end, Blakely teachers use a balanced literacy approach in daily reading instruction, which focuses on foundational skills, deep comprehension, and fluency in reading both fiction and nonfiction texts. Beyond this, we provide our students with the access, motivation, and practice needed to successfully read literature and informational text. Teachers use a variety of instructional models such as whole group, individual, and small group instruction to teach foundational skills such as phonemic awareness and phonics, and comprehension skills such as identifying text features, making inferences, author's purpose and point of view. Students are given daily opportunities to read independently and are provided with high-quality, self-selected print materials with guidance, instruction, and accountability. Students are challenged to respond to texts in a variety of ways. Teachers incorporate the use of targeted mini-lessons, genre studies, skill-based groupings, mentor texts, etc. to both enrich or reteach. Teachers supplement with state and nationally vetted resources such as tasks and strategies provided by Achieve the Core and Read, Write Think. Not only do we constantly try to make improvements to our instructional choices to improve our efficiency and efficacy, but we also make decisions based on the changing needs of our students. Literature instruction adapts to the interests, abilities, and needs of each class.

We want each of our students to easily share and fluently write their knowledge and experiences. The All School Write has been a game-changer for our writing instruction. For the last three years, students, staff and community members have written to the same prompt. Considerable effort has been spent in using this unifying activity to restructure, realign, and increase our expectations. Annually, we have extended our instruction to bridge the gap between our students' current performance and the targets that were appropriate the previous year. Through the use of common vocabulary, thinking maps, process, and feedback tools, the students' skills and confidence have grown—and so have the staff's. We have traveled the road together. Students understand the writing process and are willing participants because they know that their writing helps them to connect with, learn from, and teach others.

Teachers believe the goal of math instruction is not simply to teach students to be adept at "answer getting", but to create confident mathematicians that can solve problems, demonstrate strong conceptual understanding, and effectively communicate the process. Blakely uses CCSS to drive math instruction, content standards, progression documents, and mathematical practices. But beyond those standards, students are frequently given the opportunity to participate in low-floor, high-ceiling tasks. A key component of our core math problem-solving emphasis is heterogeneous grouping. Students engage in number talks to hear each other's wisdom and to learn from one another. Reflecting on the past practice of homogeneous grouping at Blakely, the evidence pointed to diminished growth in our lowest performers and a quieting of student voices that once suggested divergent paths to a solution.

The science and Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) curriculum is based on the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Life science, such as units of study about trees or marine animals, and earth science, such as weather or patterns in the sky, are taught in a classroom setting at all grade levels.

Physical science that incorporates the design process is taught in our STEM specialist classes. All science curriculum is based on anchoring events. For example, the devastating Oso, Washington mudslide is used as a focus of the fourth-grade study of forces that change land. Students are challenged to consider an event or phenomenon, conduct hands-on activities and experiments that deal with the event to build knowledge and change misconceptions. We are committed to this style of instruction because it links science to the real world, making it relevant, powerful, and engaging.

Our social studies curriculum develops the students' understanding of their place in the world. Teachers have worked collaboratively to plan units that gradually grow the students' worldview: kindergarteners learn about themselves and classmates, first-graders learn about different families, second graders focus on our immediate community, third-graders research native cultures in our state, fourth graders participate in inquiry-based projects that lead to an understanding of civics and their role in a democracy, as well as state history and geography. Across all grade levels, students are involved in research and discovery that lead to the development of an understanding that they are part of something larger than themselves and the associated responsibilities of that reality. Teachers use social studies as a way to empower all students, and to promote a message of acceptance and personal identity.

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

Blakely offers all students a rich program of instruction in five specialist areas: the visual arts, STEM, music, physical education and library media studies. Instruction is developed by teachers with expertise in their specialty and in rooms designed specifically for each curriculum. While the rooms are separate and unique, specialist teachers actively collaborate with each other and with classroom teachers to support CCSS, school-wide curricular goals, character education, and creative classroom projects. In specialist classrooms, different types of learners have unique opportunities to shine. Creativity, perseverance, risk-taking, flexibility, cooperation and problem-solving are taught and reinforced.

All Blakely students have weekly access to the STEM program. Students apply science skills and understanding to complete engineering design challenges. Projects are linked to science taught in the classroom and physical science taught in STEM. The Engineering design process (EDP) is an iterative and collaborative process. Students develop resilience and grit as they collaborate with others to find successful solutions to real-world problems. Students are encouraged to refine and rework their designs until they persevere and find a solution. In the first year of STEM, students would often burst into tears when their ideas did not work. Now students anticipate and acknowledge that this failure is an important part of the process. Examples of design challenges include: engineering earthquake-safe buildings, using an understanding of seed dispersal to design flying toys, designing sculptures out of conductive and insulating dough that light up, buzz and spin, and designing cars that are powered by the wind. This program has inspired many students to consider a career in STEM fields. Annually, Blakely 4th graders are asked what they would like to be when they grow up for a PTO-sponsored art project. At the start of the STEM program in 2015, 27% reported an interest in a STEM-related career and in 2018, that number rose to 51%.

STEM and Art classes are closely linked as both embrace the design-thinking process. Teachers collaborated to develop an after-school animation club where students learn the creative process of claymation and develop technical skills to light their set, add sound, and edit their work. This program is now also offered to every fourth grader. Our art teacher integrates technology into the creative work of students - colorful paintings of birds come alive using an augmented reality app to layer animation over their work. Projects are often integrated with the social studies and science curriculum. Student artwork is posted on every wall and does not invite comparison or promote competition.

Curriculum integration can be more challenging in music and physical education, yet both teachers find opportunities to connect to classroom experiences. In addition to teaching the basics of beat, rhythm and pitch, the music teacher engages her students in hands-on-experiences with the science of sound. She also connects the music program to our character education goals and integrates multicultural materials and experiences. In the gym, students learn important traditional physical skills, get plenty of exercise, and are coached to adopt social and emotional health practices that are of lifelong value. Character traits such as perseverance, generosity and integrity are reinforced during lessons in both of these special programs and

collaboration amongst students is often required to succeed.

Recently, our school benefited from a switch to a flexibly scheduled Library Media Program. Instruction in the library is initiated by the media specialist or the classroom teacher, often taught by both, and directly supports classroom instruction. Projects integrate the use of technology to teach specific content, research skills, and literacy. Our librarian delivers targeted instruction to ensure all of our students know the responsibilities of digital citizenry. She also provides students with the opportunity to participate in Hour of Code and facilitates the learning of twenty-first-century technology skills. Fourth graders participate in the Battle of the Books — a tournament-structured activity pitting books within the same genre against each other. Students make videos to “sell” their preferred titles. Our librarian also uses this flexible time to teach and mentor staff. She established a weekly Reading Advisory session for a third-grade class when a new teacher needed assistance in helping her students in selecting a “just right” book. The teacher and the librarian have now worked side-by-side for three years. Individual students, small groups, whole classes, and at times, whole grade levels use the library for all types of learning experiences. Lessons begin in the library and continue in the classroom. Classroom teachers visit the library for longer lessons and/or on consecutive days if needed. Our library is an inviting space and the heart of our school. It is connected and integral to all the teaching we do.

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

Blakely uses research-based strategies that ensure student needs are at the core of all instructional decisions. Teachers use authentic, open-ended questioning techniques that go much deeper than “answer getting” and offer several entry points for learners of all levels. Teachers also employ several strategies that can be found on the What Works Clearinghouse website. Students are provided adequate wait time to ensure equal access to class discourse.

Teachers prioritize learning standards and intentionally scaffold them in a structure that prevents learning gaps, helps students attain mastery, and extends learning when appropriate. Students engage in independent tasks, collaborative partnerships, small groups, class discussions, technology-assisted tasks, and meaningful hands-on learning. Students produce products that honor student interests, learning styles, abilities and preferences. Blakely attends to diverse student needs by ensuring differentiation occurs in content, process, product, and environment. Our Differentiation Specialist and Title I teachers provide targeted instruction to our highest and lowest performing students. Our staff is genuinely understanding of students’ individual learning needs, culture and linguistic backgrounds, and learning styles. Teachers modify learning experiences with the help of the English Language, Special Education, and Highly Capable teachers.

To promote a rich literacy environment, teachers use one-on-one reading and writing conferences to gather information that help teachers jointly meet individual students’ learning needs, set goals, and progress-monitor at all levels. Mathematics lessons are student-centered. New concepts begin with teachers formatively assessing student understanding and using data to drive instruction. Teachers embed lessons with rich math tasks, scaffolded to ensure student success at every level, and use instructional strategies that provide equal attention to procedural fluency, conceptual understanding and real-world application of concepts. Blakely uses Spatial Temporal (ST) Math to create opportunities for students to move away from digitized drills, and instead put them in the mindset to think creatively and persevere in problem-solving.

Because of shared ownership of all students, every student in the school is discussed by the staff in Collaborative Academic Support Team (CAST) meetings in order to develop a three-tiered Response to Intervention system that allows us to track student strengths and concerns over multiple years. Tier 1 strategies include universal best practices. In CAST, teachers are provided release time to meet multiple times a year to discuss supports and interventions for identified students. The principal, school psychologist, social worker, special education teacher, speech pathologist, and classroom teacher attend team meetings and collaboratively identify specific, measurable goals for students. They then design intensive interventions to help students meet those goals. Examples of Tier 2 supports include behavior contracts or incentive systems, individual or small group counseling, social skills lessons, individual “break” passes, and additional positive adult interactions with a variety of people in the school including staff in our custodial, kitchen, playground departments, and our technology specialist. At a recent team meeting, we discovered we

had many students who learn best when standing or moving. As a result, we have some classrooms piloting flexible learning space that includes stand-up desks. We also started the Morning Milers, where students meet to run the school track to start their day.

Assessment of learning occurs consistently throughout each classroom. Teachers assess student understanding and make modifications to instruction based on assessment outcomes. Many teachers pre-assess student knowledge with mini-assessment tasks, class discussions, warm-up problems, and student discourse. Teachers use data from national and district standardized assessments and classroom-based assessments to make instructional decisions.

All School Writes are a powerful school-created assessment that ensures vertical grade level alignment of writing expectations in our school. After exploring a common theme, all students write to the same prompt. At the culmination of our writing, our staff meets to identify positive trends and correlate trend data to the CCSS to identify instructional goals. This school-wide assessment allows for meaningful reflection across all grade levels and a resetting of the bar based on the current achievement level.

Teachers also use data from FASTbridge, a district wide summative assessment that is administered three times a year. FASTbridge provides data that is used to identify students needing intervention and monitors student growth throughout the year. This summative assessment provides national, district and school percentiles. As a high performing school, we constantly monitor student performance in relationship to school percentiles to help identify students who are struggling within our school population. Recent fourth-grade reading data showed that a student performing in the 50th percentile in our school was nationally performing in the 84th percentile, likewise a student may perform in the 40th percentile nationally but only in the 10th percentile of our school population. Despite having an acceptable national percentile, we recognize that these students need extra support to feel successful learning alongside their peers. We create targeted intervention to close the achievement gap that exists with the performance of their peers.

Our school participates in the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) Consortium. Students in third and fourth grade take the SBA assessment in the spring. Fourth-grade teachers are able to use the end-of-year third-grade data to reflect on student needs prior to the beginning of the school year. Looking at 2016-2017 SBA data, 92% of third-grade students met standard in ELA. Digging deeper into the claims, we discovered that 52% of students were at/near standard in speaking and listening. Knowing this was the most challenging claim for our students allowed for targeted instruction. Third- and fourth-grade students also take part in several SBA interim assessments throughout the school year to assess student understanding. After students take SBA interim assessments, teachers are able to reflect on the SBA's useful data to plan targeted instruction. Teachers view results and provide intervention where needed. A shared goal of our staff is for all students to exceed, not just meet standards.

Blakely is a high performing school. Our staff have a strong command of the CCSS and use them to direct the progression of learning. Teachers take pride in ensuring each student receives 180 days of learning, regardless of where they are on the first day of school. We hold all students to high expectations and have a strong belief that each student can achieve success. We constantly reflect on effective instructional strategies to ensure maximum engagement and success. We are frequently moving through the cycle of assessment and providing instruction responsive to formative and summative data. Most importantly, we maintain a shared ownership of our students, celebrating successes while maintaining an appetite for knowledge that will further student gains.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

The meaningful work we do in educating and encouraging young people is sacred. We consider it a privilege and our good fortune to work at an elementary school. Our staff works to construct an environment that fosters sharing, open communication, and risk-taking. We truly believe that the talent, information, and expertise of any individual is amplified and extended when it becomes part of our collective knowledge. We have high expectations and high standards for ourselves and our students. Our success is made possible by the strong social and emotional support we provide for each other. We teach key character traits like perseverance, integrity, honesty, gratitude, and respect. Traits are introduced via teacher-created skits and provide common language across the school. Adults and students acknowledge and celebrate these behaviors by giving our little bulldogs “Positive Paws”. The student-led Kindness Committee orchestrates kind acts that touch students and staff alike. Their work is a very visible reminder that we are all here to support each other. This sense of family allows for students to feel comfortable in taking intellectual risks and in being their true and authentic selves.

There is a sense of shared responsibility and accountability that connects staff, students, parents, and school district personnel. We work and play as a team. We link arms to climb to the metaphorical summit. This philosophical thread is apparent in our staff’s trust and faith in each other, but also in our willingness to address our weaknesses. We model it and teach it to our students as we collaborate to create cross-grade level lessons, plan all-school events like our Maker Faire and All School Write, and are seen together socially in our small town.

We begin each staff meeting with a celebration of our recent successes and verbal thank yous to those that made them possible. We acknowledge the support we receive. The parent community at Blakely is generous with its money and its time, funding both innovative ideas and classroom material needs. Every day, volunteers work with students or assist teachers. Our classified staff is a much-valued and essential part of the team. At the heart of our success is how we connect, support, and amplify each other. Unsolicited, our custodian sent this observation: “Blakely is a great example of the ‘next person up’ mentality. When one staff member is down, two step in to fill that void. We find a way to get the job done, never losing focus of our paramount duty.” We laugh all the time at the funny things kids write, at the silly things we do, and at all that is crazy in our teaching world. Humor is our welcome, our goodbye, and our bridge to each other and to our students.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Blakely is committed to the academic excellence and personal success of every student in every classroom. Central to this commitment is the development of partnerships with families, community, and partner organizations. Leveraging resources to improve the education of children is a necessity in order to meet the needs of a diverse group of students. Blakely is fortunate to have a community and parent group with varied expertise, time, and a willingness to support all students. Over the course of the 17/18 school year nearly 70 percent of our families have already volunteered in some capacity. Each day parents, grandparents, community members, and retired teachers work with students in a multitude of ways to support and supplement their learning. They provide intervention to struggling students, or students not reaching their full potential. Teachers take great care in identifying the strengths of volunteers and the needs of students through our CAST and our General Education Intervention Team. Families are updated regarding academic achievement and challenges on a regular basis via email, phone, face-to-face, progress reports and parent conferences.

Our PTO is also an essential group in providing supplemental experiences and volunteer opportunities that enhance our students’ education. The Blakely PTO works closely with school leadership and classroom teachers to act as a liaison between local organizations, such as the Bainbridge Arts and Humanities Council, to bring storytellers, dance instructors, actors, authors and artists into our school to work with children. In addition, our librarian invites local authors into the library to share their books, model writing

and build enthusiasm for reading. In October the local fire department sponsors a fire safety assembly and then a pancake breakfast. The fourth grade invites fire and police departments to participate in a First Aid Frenzy where fourth-grade students are divided into groups that move through sessions and cover topics such as water safety and wound care. Teachers work with regional businesses, such as Washington Grain Commission to facilitate meaningful lessons to teach future leaders about the importance of environmental stewardship. Most recently we utilized a well-known authority with Social and Emotional Learning to work with staff to develop activities for students.

Blakely takes each of these opportunities to showcase student work throughout the building as well as on our website and Facebook page. Communication with all stakeholders is essential in ensuring longevity and success of our programs as well as growing support.

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

Our staff believes that the best professional development (PD) inspires and exposes us to content and methods. We actively seek quality professional development to address our students' identified needs (math intervention, core writing instruction, social-emotional learning, foundational reading) as outlined in our yearly School Improvement Plans. We determine and confirm our course of action with formative and summative assessment data, but also trust our collective professional judgment. We are intentional about how we use our district-provided weekly release time.

All staff participate in big-picture analysis, the planning for the implementation of an initiative or remedy, and finally in the evaluation of its success. Recently, we have focused on: the writing process, advocating and planning integration of new technology, coordinating our Maker Faire, and staying current and relevant in the ways we communicate with our parent community.

Blakely staff were the first in our district to develop a comprehensive understanding of the CCSS because of the exceptional professional development opportunities we participated in, shared with each other, and incorporated into our instruction. Teachers learned from professional conferences, staff-delivered presentations, and online resources. Books and links to great websites were regularly shared among staff. In the year following Blakely's deep dive into Common Core math instruction, we saw our state test scores rise for all students and the achievement gap begin to close. Once the teachers had a deeper understanding of the material, we were better able to target instruction and plan for interventions.

Our principal, the district, Bainbridge Schools Foundation (BSF), and non-profit organizations like ZENO have funded trips for teams of teachers beyond our small island with the expectation that they will return and share new found expertise and best practices. Recently, small groups have attended conferences such as International Society for Technology in Education in 2010, 2012 and 2016, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Girls in STEM conference, and many regional math, literacy, and special education conferences. Staff members have also attended Google training events. Additional professional development is accessed through peer observations, staff presentations, model lessons from our instructional coach, webinars, and book studies.

Our staff focuses on change that affirmatively answers the question, "Is it the best thing for kids?" This helps us grow as well. In focusing on two content areas (writing and STEM) that emphasize revision, reiteration, and tweaking, our process has become less failure-averse and more dynamic. In teaching and modeling the design process to children we have become better ourselves at reflecting and redesigning what we do. We have a more elastic approach to the implementation of change. We see it as more on-going. Developing a growth mindset is a journey we share with our students.

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

Blakely has a leadership structure that can best be described as inclusive and fluid. There are a thousand entry points, a thousand open doors. Some teachers lead by being our voice on district committees. Others introduce and establish in-school or after-school initiatives or projects. Still others attend conferences and then provide related PD. Blakely leaders write grants requesting funding from the Blakely PTO or BSF for

innovative projects. There are staff members who eagerly mentor new teachers and those that serve on Leadership, the school's organized team that meets bimonthly. Our Social Committee, in a leadership role, monitors morale and marks milestones.

The leadership structure at Blakely lacks the hierarchy that is commonly found in most schools. Because the staff is very stable, we know the ebb and flow of career teachers' commitment to the many tasks required by school leaders. Leaders have babies, toddlers, sick spouses, and aging parents. We take turns, we step up, and we do what we can to support one another.

Our teacher-selected principal has a "yes" style of management that encourages teachers to ask for what they need to be professionally competent and challenged. He encourages the staff to seek knowledge and solutions. He is supportive of ideas that might "move the needle", solve a problem, or in any way help our students be more academically successful, happier, or healthier. Recently staff introduced the idea of substituting a "maker" celebration in place of our traditional Open House and Science Fair — a night with historically high attendance, but low engagement. Instead, we looked for an event that would inspire our community. Our staff agreed to try an all-school Maker Faire which celebrates creativity, invention and resourcefulness with design-thinking at its core. The event became part of our School Improvement Plan. To make this change a success, we were given building planning days to develop, design and organize our ideas- developing both high-tech and low-tech projects/activities. Parents participated alongside their children, racing Spheros through a maze, building and testing catapults, bridges, and light sabers, and breaking student-created codes. Now in its second year, the night is a huge success and generates a new level of excitement, brings our school and larger community together, and accurately showcases the forward-thinking, creative work we do at Blakely.

The leaders at Blakely are simply those that take an interest in determining what is worthy and in selling it. Our staff is willing to work very hard if the work is worthy. There is always someone with a clear vision or who passionately feels a need. We all speak up. Said Tom Peters, "Leaders don't create followers, they create more leaders."

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

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For many years, we took great pride in being a place where students were truly seen. We actively sought to view them as unique learners and special individuals. But it wasn't until we consciously made room for student voice in our educational program that we were able to really accelerate the learning that takes place at Blakely.

We all have the same hope for our classrooms — to engage and inspire each student. During a PD session, our staff began to honestly reflect on practices to increase student engagement. We collectively acknowledged that in order to get students engaged, we needed to make them the center of our instruction. We implemented strategies such as increased wait time, targeted feedback, goal setting, and self assessments but felt sure there was more that could be done. Evidence of progress towards this goal manifested itself as increased participation which was satisfying, but not gratifying. We wanted more for our students and for ourselves. We wanted classrooms in which students were at the heart of learning, where their ideas and views were honored and risk-taking was part of the norm. We understood that upping the number of hands raised in response to teacher-asked questions was not really putting our students at the center of our classrooms.

The practice that put us on the path to increased success was strategically spotlighting and promoting student voice. The spark started in math. Teachers began using number talks with the goal of increasing math reasoning and communication. Students were presented an open-ended or above grade-level math question during a number talk and the peer interaction would begin — thinking, asking questions and explaining as the teacher would model the student-led discourse with numbers and symbols. Student engagement soared during number talks. Even the shyest student in the class came alive during these student-directed discussions. Students quickly began to ask to do the modeling/explaining. Staff realized that this small spark had the potential to become a large flame. As more students began to articulate their ideas, we realized the potential of our students and started to examine the rigor of classroom tasks. Unpacking the diversity within student thought led to a genuine understanding of where our students were and where we could take them.

Teachers began to offer more open-ended, authentic discussion questions across all content areas. Amplifying student voice began to impact task complexity. The more we heard, the more we were amazed at what our students could do when we let them lead and teach. Discourse became a valuable means of formative assessment. We began leveling up our instruction to meet the needs of the entire population. It was our duty to ensure our students did not just meet standards, but exceeded them. Data supported our observations. The 2017 SBA scores showed that 76% of our 4th graders scored a 4 (the highest score) in ELA, and 73% scored a 4 in math. Our third graders had almost identical scores.

Honoring student voice and encouraging students to communicate their thoughts empowers students. A student who feels valued and included is more likely to take a risk. Teacher talk time and rote questioning has decreased. As task complexity increased, students' level of engagement went up as well. Students are the heart of our instruction: we ask, we listen, we learn, we adapt. To quote educator Josef Albers, "Good teaching is more a giving of right questions than a giving of right answers."