

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. 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, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 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.
3. 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 5 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, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	8	14	22
1	34	19	53
2	23	21	44
3	30	24	54
4	29	15	44
5	20	31	51
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	144	124	268

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 5 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 0 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 86 % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: 2%

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

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	3
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	6
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	268
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

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

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

Mandarin Chinese, Arabic

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 11%
Total number students who qualify: 29

8. Students receiving special education services: 17 %
46 Total number of students served

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

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>7</u> Autism | <u>6</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>8</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>7</u> Developmental Delay | <u>8</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>8</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: 9
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	15
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	7
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 18:1

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

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2018.

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

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

Yes No

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

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

We seek to create a challenging, safe, nurturing, and supportive atmosphere where each student's self-esteem and love of learning is fostered by positive relationships.

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

North Reading, Massachusetts is a suburban town located approximately 18 miles north of Boston. The town, incorporated in 1853, has a population of approximately 15,000 residents and 2,400 students in a school system comprised of three elementary schools and a middle/high school campus. The town prides itself on an excellent academic program that regularly sends students to some of the nation's best colleges. The E. Ethel Little School opened in 1958 and was named in honor of a lifelong resident and 21-year member of the school committee. Mrs. Little was devoted to the community and received a Silver Scroll signed by President Truman for her service to the American Red Cross. The school was designed as a single story structure and barrier-free environment. This serves us well, as we pride ourselves on being an inclusive environment. We recognize that students share more similarities than differences. Our learning community respects each individual and challenges all to develop their full potential. We have grown to 15 classrooms and 268 students or "Little School Labradors" (excluding the district pre-kindergarten program that resides in our building and including our Reaching Independence through Structured Education (RISE) program for students with autism). Almost 12% of our population is economically disadvantaged, 17% are students with disabilities, and less than 1% are English-language learners. Our students are well-rounded, involved community members who represent the "green and gold" proudly at athletic events and visual/performing arts performances throughout the town and state.

As a school community, we foster a love of reading and literacy. Each grade level has a scheduled 90-minute uninterrupted block for reading and writing. Our reading specialists also act as coaches in the classroom. Through instructional scaffolding, inclusion support, comprehensive and proactive planning of lessons/units, the use of data to drive our decisions, and a variety of teacher facilitation techniques, we are better able to address the needs of our diverse learning community. The increased use of cooperative learning has shifted the way teachers are teaching and students are learning. Additionally, we utilize a comprehensive Response to Intervention model in reading. Through small and flexible groupings and progress monitoring, we have been successful in increasing the capacity of our students by targeting their specific needs.

We have high expectations for our students and our curriculum is rigorous. Our ultimate goal is to educate the whole child, to create a safe and secure environment where students build confidence, accept responsibility, become independent, and taste success. By utilizing a social emotional curriculum, implementing positive behavior interventions, and encouraging students to be active participants, we have seen a shift in our students' learning. They are building strong relationships with their peers and teachers. They genuinely love to be here and they are invested in their education. These efforts have led to improved attendance, behavior, and overall growth in academic achievement.

The building of a positive culture is essential. Educators must feel supported, valued, and empowered to be innovative. The staff of the Little School recognizes that building strong relationships is at the core of student learning. The strength of adult relationships begins the trickle-down effect to students. As a professional learning community, we work collaboratively to keep students at the center of all we do. Through ongoing professional development and scheduled weekly collaboration, we learn from each other, share resources, and improve our practice. The staff also gathers regularly for community building activities such as our long-standing tradition of holiday caroling as a staff in the surrounding neighborhood. We feel that our culture is strengthened by events that improve the home-school connection. Families are always welcome here. The dedication of our outstanding Parent-Teacher Organization has provided us with state-of-the-art technology and enrichment programs that enhance our curriculum and support student exploration. Our parent community plays a significant role in our success.

We are very proud of our many traditions including our morning radio announcements "from the W.E.E. Little School," the Pledge of Allegiance and national anthem, and our monthly "Top Dog" certificates (recognizing leaders and good citizens among our students.) Our annual holiday program, Arts Night, and Family Fitness Night are highly anticipated events and on a biennial basis, we are excited to deliver a high-quality drama production with our 4th and 5th grade students. Even our book fair and biannual reading incentive programs have become wildly popular traditions (and one such event ended with the principal

kissing a pig...twice!) How great it is when you can inspire children to read independently and for pleasure! Finally, through community service, our staff and students have built awareness to social issues and supported a wide variety of organizations through volunteerism and monthly donations to multiple causes.

“We believe in you” has been a long-standing theme in our building. We believe in our students and school community. We hope that Mrs. E. Ethel Little would be very proud of the school named in her honor.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

The Little School’s English language arts program is completely aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Our English language arts program provides instruction in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Instruction in these areas is integrated across the curriculum.

The reading program is designed to provide foundational skills in the five elements of balanced literacy: phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary and reading fluency. These are addressed through systematic, multisensory approaches that provide explicit instruction which emphasizes phonemic awareness, phonics, word study, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension strategies, handwriting and spelling.

Reading instruction takes place throughout the day in a variety of groupings. Children engage text in a sophisticated manner, delving into character development, making inferences, and participating in guided discussions both with peers and teachers. Providing a balance between instructional and independent texts is an important goal for all teachers. As reading skills develop, more attention is given to higher-level thinking. A guided reading book room was established to provide teachers with rich, multicultural fiction and nonfiction titles that support and challenge students on all levels.

We have implemented a Response to Intervention (RTI) model that serves us well in providing targeted instruction to small groups. This process begins with universal assessments (iReady, Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and DIBELS) that guide our instruction and provide data to inform our multi-tiered groupings. Instructional groupings are flexible and designed to meet student’s individual needs and are tracked through biweekly progress monitoring.

We seek to establish the reading/writing connection by using every reading experience as an opportunity to teach and reinforce core-writing concepts. Through incremental mastery of key writing skills, students are exposed to various text structures, organizations, genres and purposes (Empowering Writers, Write Traits). Our overarching goal is to create lifelong readers and writers who will be successful in the 21st century.

1b. Mathematics:

The E. Ethel Little School is currently in its third year of using the Eureka Math program in grades K-5. To meet the needs of our diverse learners, we also incorporate Zearn, Prodigy, and Khan Academy, for more personalized learning and additional skill practice. In order to monitor student progress, we use iReady (three times per year), and Eureka module assessments and classroom informal assessments on an ongoing basis. We use the data from these assessments to identify students’ strengths and weaknesses and to plan accordingly for instructional groupings, etc. Individual teachers and grade level teams use the data to guide their instruction and to address any gaps or weaknesses in their instructional program.

During the 2015-2016 school year, as part of the district curriculum review cycle, the North Reading Public Schools began looking at new and improved math programs that were fully aligned to the Massachusetts State Standards and met a rigorous criteria set forth by the district. The assistant superintendent, curriculum councils, and math leaders reviewed multiple programs and implemented a year long pilot of four different programs. Upon completion, rubrics were used to assess the strength and ability to meet our needs.

Our success comes from the collaboration that happens within and across grade levels as well as the resources that are provided by Eureka. There are free webinars, a home component, a Teach Eureka Video Series for new teachers to the curriculum, teacher resource packs which help with instructional groups, small group work and the Universal Design for Learning (UDL). It is important to recognize the needs of our learners and through the use of data (including observational data), it is important to provide a differentiated

approach to teaching and learning so that every child gets what they need. The Eureka Math program provides us with what we need to accomplish this.

1c. Science:

Students at the E. Ethel Little School are engaged in science and technology/engineering instruction from kindergarten through grade five. Using the Massachusetts Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum Frameworks as a guide and the updated/aligned curriculum, each grade level provides exposure to a progression of concepts and content in physical science, earth & space science, life science and technology/engineering.

At every grade level the focus of instruction is inquiry-based learning using real-world phenomena to drive teaching and learning. Hands-on labs and investigations in classrooms and design challenges in our makerspace support the development of problem-solving skills through collaboration with classmates. Grade level English language arts standards are integrated during science instruction as teachers help students develop science-centered language through the use of differentiated nonfiction reading passages and science notebooks. Math standards are similarly incorporated as students collect, organize and analyze the data gathered during investigations to make predictions and form conclusions.

Assessment of learning focuses on the student's ability to build, use, and apply knowledge. During hands-on investigations and design challenges, teachers are constantly engaged in the informal assessment of students using rubrics and checklists to look for evidence of conceptual understanding and application of the scientific and/or engineering process. Students also engage in developmentally appropriate assessments that might include drawing a representation of a concept explored, adding written commentary to diagrams, or applying knowledge learned to explaining a similar real-world problem.

At the fifth grade level, standardized test results are also analyzed to look for trends in strengths and weaknesses across the strands. Exemplars of student writing, available on the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website, are used to help students refine their writing skills as they apply to the areas of science and technology/engineering. Ongoing assessment is important to guide instruction and to ensure that students are learning in accordance with grade level expectations.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

Students in grades K-5 are engaged in a comprehensive social studies curriculum which aligns to the newly adopted Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Frameworks. Teachers are committed to ensuring that adequate time is scheduled for the study of civics, geography, history, and economics. Through the integration of literature, informational and narrative texts, and new vocabulary, students are building their understanding of the past and are better able to make connections to their lives. Students in elementary school will learn about their community, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the United States of America, and the World. Multiple grade level textbooks are used including History Alive, MacMillan's People Together -My World Adventures in Time and Place, and Studies Weekly. We also utilize various periodicals such as Time for Kids, National Geographic, and Kids Discover Magazine for current events.

The teaching of social studies is a perfect time for teachers and students to build a culture of productive classroom talk. Teachers are increasingly using Socratic Circles, turn-and-talk, and Accountable Talk in the classroom. Students are taking responsibility for their learning and are engaged and motivated to participate. These practices allow students to learn through group discussions, to listen to others, to disagree/agree respectfully, and to learn how to support their thinking.

Technology has provided great opportunities for students to research relevant subject matter and to demonstrate their comprehension. Project-based presentations, in conjunction with a variety of traditional assessments, are used to assess student understanding. Projects are researched and presented to the school population and our students' families. This includes our national monument project, our explorer wax museum project, and the colonial village project. Our 4th and 5th graders are also participants in the annual National Geographic Geography Bee that takes place each January.

1e. For secondary schools:

1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The E. Ethel Little School's music program supports essential skills and knowledge by providing students a sequential curriculum that includes music, dance, performance, and theater. Students in grades K-5 attend two 30-minute music classes weekly, exposing them to a variety of historical and culturally important figures that relate to music. Instrumental music lessons and chorus are offered to children in grades 4 and 5. Fourth graders enjoy the opportunity of attending the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Learning through music can raise students' awareness of distinctive sounds, which is important in learning to read and write, and for English Language Learners, to achieve fluency. Music is a great tool for learning across the curriculum. Students perform and move to music that has cross-curriculum connections to science and social studies (including culture/language connections). A well-rounded comprehensive arts program plays an important role in developing the school culture, where students are able to express themselves in a safe and supportive community. Music helps support students making connections to their core subjects.

The visual arts program at the Little School incorporates art history, art appreciation and studio production. Classes for K-5 are once weekly for 45 minutes. Students are exposed to a variety of genres including portraits, landscapes and still life, while learning to express their creativity and master art materials in developmentally appropriate ways. Each grade level experiences two-dimensional media (painting, drawing and printmaking) and three dimensional media (ceramics, sculpture, weaving and sewing). Each unit and skill is developed and built upon year-to-year. Students are introduced to artists/artworks from ancient to contemporary times and from a variety of cultures through primary sources and literature.

The art teacher, in collaboration with the classroom teacher and digital learning team offers choice-based STEAM activities in our makerspace to grade levels. As the culmination of their experiences in art history and studio art production, every fifth grade student participates in a field trip to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, which is linked to the Massachusetts state frameworks in social studies. Each child in the school also participates in the selection and display of artworks on the annual Arts Night event that showcases the artistic and musical endeavors of our school community.

Physical education is scheduled for all students in K-5, twice weekly for 30 minutes. We utilize a skill-themed approach following the SHAPE America's National Physical Education Standards, focusing on developmentally appropriate skills and taught through individual, paired, and group activities. Ensuring repetition, fun, and exciting activities, students work towards mastery. To promote the importance of an active lifestyle, we invite families to participate in our Family Fitness Night for an opportunity to experience activities such as aerobics, karate, golf, etc. Our school nurse collaborates often with our PE teacher. She is proactive in teaching health-related lessons on nutrition and exercise. Most recently, she designed a 4th grade sleep habit survey to determine the effect on student achievement. Students tracked their sleep habits, collected data, and identified ways to improve. As a member of the district Wellness Committee, she has worked closely with staff to promote self-care and a healthy lifestyle.

The E. Ethel Little School (and the North Reading Public Schools) offers an extra-curricular foreign language program through Global Child Inc., for students in kindergarten through grade five. Both Spanish and French classes are offered to students one morning per week, for 45 minutes, (before school) in ten-week sessions. This is a tuition-based opportunity for parents who choose to enroll their child(ren) in either of the two languages offered. The program runs twice during the academic year (fall and spring). Students in grades K-5 are offered tuition-based foreign language classes that meet once weekly for 45-minutes. There are two 10-week sessions (fall and winter). Classes in Spanish, Chinese, and French emphasize listening and speaking with culture integrated into the language. The students receive materials to

practice at home. Parents are invited to visit during the final class of the session to observe their child's progress.

Students in grades K-5 visit the library/media center weekly for 1-hour to browse for books and participate in technology lessons. Lessons are co-designed by the digital learning specialist and classroom teacher to augment the classroom curriculum. By using the SAMR model (Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, and Redefinition) we transform learning so that all students can experience tasks that were once inconceivable. The four technology strands: computing and society, digital tools and collaboration, computing systems and computational thinking, are addressed through project-based opportunities. Students learn to complete research using search engines and databases and evaluate the information for accuracy. Our newly designed makerspace promotes collaboration, problem solving, and the utilization of the engineering design process. We move beyond the walls of our school community by participating in mystery geography Skype activities, author visits online, and virtual tours via Google Expeditions. Students visiting the media center participate in hands-on projects that give them an opportunity to solve real-world problems through project-based learning, while developing 21st century skills.

3. Special Populations:

The Little School provides a continuum of services to support all learners in our school community. Instruction, interventions, and assessments are tailored to meet the diverse needs of students from kindergarten through grade five. Within classrooms, a combination of small and whole group instruction is used in order to differentiate instruction according to specific class and student needs. In addition to tailoring the size of the group during instruction, the materials are also varied to provide a multi-sensory approach. The use of manipulatives, technology, and movement ensures students are accessing the curriculum through multiple modes. There is frequent communication and collaboration between general educators, special education teachers, reading specialists, Title 1 teachers, and service providers (speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, school psychologist) to address student specific needs within the classroom. Through the District Accommodation Plan (DCAP), 504, Individualized Education Plans (IEP), and Individual Student Success Plans (ISSP), students have accommodations/modifications implemented throughout the school day.

Regarding interventions, tiered instruction, using instructional groupings based on benchmark and progress monitoring data, is used at various grade levels. The consistent monitoring of students within these tiers, allows teachers and service providers to provide interventions and monitor student progress. Collaboration and discussions occur through Instructional Support Team meetings for students that are performing below grade level. Interventions and subsequent data collection determine if additional support may be required through a special education evaluation.

Assessments are also tailored to meet individual needs of students. Based on student needs, they can be administered to students in a small group, individually, or in a separate location outside of the classroom. Assessments may be read aloud to students, students may have the option to type or write their responses, provide answers orally, and/or some students may have responses scribed for them.

The numbers of students with disabilities at a particular grade level can vary from year to year. Often the numbers are less than the minimum required for a cohort (we believe thanks to our Response to Intervention model). Our focus for the past four years has been on our "high needs" students (students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, and English language learners). Our data from a variety of assessments drives our decisions for student placement, groupings for support services, and overall programmatic design. For example, upon analysis of the data for our current 4th grade, it was determined that a co-taught model would benefit our students. In one classroom, we teamed a general education, special education teacher (both trained in co-teaching), and an inclusion paraprofessional to better support the needs of our students. This has enabled daily teacher collaboration and the ability to plan for all students. In addition, our Title I math tutor, reading specialist, and service providers work in the classroom, as required. We provide more personalized learning/enrichment for our students who are performing above grade level through differentiated reading material, challenging comprehension activities/projects, and technology such as Zearn and Khan Academy.

At the Little School, we consistently strive to develop relationships among staff, students, parents, and community. To that end, we work hard to create manageable caseloads for our special education liaisons to allow for the development of trusting relationships in order to foster meaningful academic growth.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The E. Ethel Little School believes that an emotionally healthy, safe and secure atmosphere is the foundation for fostering a child's love of learning and that the basis of this is the development of strong relationships among staff and students.

After participating in a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) retreat with district administrators and teachers in 2018, the Little School formed a committee to ensure a common understanding and vision as it relates to the development of important life skills in our students. We use Open Circle in the classroom to address a variety of social issues that focus on friendship, empathy, and acceptance. However, one program is not the solution to social emotional health. Rather, SEL must permeate all we do. Teachers have begun to implement goal setting, growth mindset, and mindfulness activities with students and the use of turn-and-talk, think-pair-share, and Socratic circles have improved the collaborative nature of the classroom. Students are self-evaluating, reflecting, and have a voice in their learning. We are in the process of implementing Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS). Throughout the year, our students are exposed to good role models and community-building opportunities. They are motivated to work hard and make responsible decisions. One recent example is our "Light up the School with Kindness" event, where our "Book Buddies" (older and younger students) partnered to reflect upon their ability to make the world a better place. Their colorful light bulbs now adorn our walls to promote this positive message.

Our educators are valued members of this professional learning community. We encourage our teachers to continually learn and empower them to try new and innovative approaches in the classroom. Weekly grade-level collaborations provide them an opportunity to share ideas and learn from each other. We recently developed a "pineapple chart" (a method of peer observation), where teachers can drop-in to watch a lesson. If there's a pineapple on a classroom door, you are encouraged to visit. Educators are valued and recognized in a variety of ways. We spotlight ideas and accomplishments at staff meetings and through public praise. We celebrate Teacher Appreciation Week with surprise visits from the principal's traveling coffee cart. Most importantly, as the experts in teaching and learning, our educators are included in the decision making process. Educators who feel valued are motivated to remain in their jobs, look for ways to become involved in the community, and constantly seek ways to self-improve. There is no greater impact on student success than invested teachers.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The Little School considers family and community to have an essential role in our success. As active participants on our School Improvement Council and Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), they are involved in decisions that directly impact student success. The PTO fundraises and provides content-related enrichment programs/field trips, classroom technology, and supplies that enhance our academic program. They implement opportunities for improvement, such as our new online school supply ordering system for parents. They celebrate the staff by providing monthly breakfasts and daily events during "Teacher Appreciation Week."

Family and community members often volunteer in classrooms to assist teachers and often make presentations that connect to our students' daily lives. This includes the local police and fire departments, area dentists, the Elks, local real estate agents, and area businesses (Amazon Robotics), to name a few. Our students proudly participate in poster and poetry contests that are sponsored by the local Garden Club and Municipal Light Company.

We invite families and community to visit often and especially for our annual Academic Open House, Family Fitness Night, Arts Night, Geography Bee, Science Fair, holiday program, and our musical performances (including grade level shows and band/chorus). The school community is kept informed of events, and academic/school achievements through newsletters, the school website, Twitter, and the PTO Facebook page.

An excellent example of family and community engagement is our recent completion of a new playground. As a long-standing school improvement goal, the PTO took on the tremendous task of planning, fundraising, and building a new structure. Many area businesses, along with the families of our students, generously donated to this cause and after approximately one year, raised over \$120,000. On the weekend of “the build,” dozens of staff, parents/guardians, and community members worked together to ensure that every need was met. Parents arrived with heavy machinery, the Chamber of Commerce and the local bank donated food and water for the workers, and neighbors came with wheelbarrows/tools to assist. Play and socialization are important components to learning. Our new playground has provided a safe environment for our students to do so.

Recognizing the importance of building strong school relationships, many of our Little School staff participate in the district’s annual Parent University. This is a full-day (Saturday) workshop that focuses on building knowledge and teaching valuable skills that benefits both families and children. It promotes an inclusive school culture, helping participants to feel even more valued in their school community, which is crucial for empowering them to become a partner in their children’s education.

3. Professional Development:

Our school’s high quality professional development (PD) is aligned with the ten Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development. The goals and objectives are clear and tied to desired student outcomes. Our educators have professional practice and student learning SMART goals that are aligned to school and district SMART goals that are based upon our plan for continuous improvement.

Our professional development is ongoing, with topics being introduced through keynotes and reinforced through book studies, professional learning groups, personalized professional learning and goals, and the presence of coaches and mentors in the building to guide the learning for the adults.

A recent focus has been on the concept of personalized professional development for educators and teams, utilizing the Future Ready Schools framework. Educators have a voice in their professional development. We have included more technology tools into our offerings, including the availability of online PD, video tutorials, and web-based learning that can be accessed anytime/anywhere. We also use technology to track goals and measure outcomes. The teachers and staff are provided time for collaboration and for the teams to move through a formative cycle of research, implementation, reflection, revision, and practice. Educators have used this time for their individual and team goals and also to explore curricular and pedagogical topics that are immediately applicable to what they are doing in their classrooms every day.

Our professional development is fully aligned to the academic standards we have set for students and all of our goals and learning opportunities are related to student achievement, growth, and the continuous improvement of our schools. Our district is a founding member of a local consortium, the Northeast Professional Educators’ Network (NPEN) that provides focused professional development for many of the educators who often do not have the opportunity for professional development that is clearly connected to their subject area. Providing focused offerings for teachers of the arts, physical education, substantially separate, team chairs, and paraprofessionals, among others, allows the school and district to more fully realize its vision for high quality professional learning.

For example, we introduced Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a topic to explore. Teachers have explored this topic as their own professional practice goals and designed action steps in order to reach their goals. We have created UDL mentors in the building who are collaborating with a multi-district UDL coach in order to model best practices, workshop lesson plans, and investigate the strategies that the teachers can use in the classroom.

4. School Leadership:

Our school leadership team is comprised of teacher leaders (two English language arts/social studies curriculum leaders (K-2, 3-5), one math, one science, a data leader, a special education support specialist,

and a principal designee), and the principal. The team meets monthly to discuss school/district initiatives. Our teacher leaders are full-time faculty and their leadership positions are non-evaluative and annual appointments. The members of the team are the liaisons between other district leaders (i.e. assistant superintendent and student support director) and curriculum councils. Their roles are vital. They are content specialists in the building along with the K-12 leaders (PE/health; performing arts; visual arts, and mentor leaders). They have developed strong and respectful working relationships with their peers. The staff trusts them and therefore, they have the ability to motivate their peers for effective change.

The philosophy of our leadership team is to “consider the future.” They work collaboratively to improve teaching and learning with a vision for what students need to know and be able to do. They are fully involved in the curriculum review cycle and devote a great deal of time and effort when evaluating, recommending, and guiding curriculum updates. This includes planning professional development for new curriculum adoptions and newly adopted assessments. They monitor the efficacy of the assessments we use, such as iReady and DIBELS, and have a close collaborative relationship with the data leader. The data is used for instructional groupings and interventions. The leaders have a thorough knowledge of their content area and standards, and in the case of special education, a solid understanding of educational laws, policies, and procedures.

The principal is a member of the leadership team. We believe a strong, competent, and highly respected leadership team is critical to ensuring meaningful change from year to year. Recognizing that communication is an important piece of teacher acceptance and “buy-in,” we provide our leaders time at monthly staff meetings in order to involve the staff on current and upcoming issues and initiatives. They are responsive to concerns, suggestions, and questions.

The leadership team focuses on ensuring that everything we do (instruction, curriculum, assessments) is closely aligned to achieve student success. This includes supporting learning at home. Parents/guardians often have difficulty assisting their children due to their lack of familiarity with the curriculum and expectations. In response, the leadership team has designed and offered an annual “Elementary Math Curriculum Night” to review the content and supplemental resources such as online tutorials and activities.

The leadership team is the glue that holds it all together. They play an important role in our school’s success.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The E. Ethel Little School believes that building a climate and culture that cultivates social emotional health is the key to our students' academic success. We are built on strong values, expectations, and relationships. We celebrate our students and staff and our school is a warm, nurturing, and inviting environment. Walking into our school, one cannot ignore the colorful bulletin boards filled with student photos, artwork, and writing. Our office staff is funny, exuberant, and welcoming. We have often heard from visitors that our school "feels like home" or "feels like family" and it's true.

Our faculty/staff are excellent role models for our students, demonstrating ongoing collaboration and communication with other staff, students, and families. Family members are often invited into the school to volunteer and visit. They are present and visible. Involved parents/guardians support education at home and communicate the importance of school to their children. We are fortunate to have a strong home-school relationship and an extremely active parent community who work diligently to enhance our instructional program through volunteerism and by providing field trips, enrichment events, and technology.

Our culture and climate provide us an environment where the tenets of social emotional learning can become a part of every interaction and everything we do. Our faculty and staff model positivity and a "growth mindset" and children are learning how to take a different, more positive perspective. Teachers are allowing opportunities for students to have choices and a voice in their learning. They are using collaborative group work to promote social problem solving, self-discipline, and communication. Children are learning empathy, respect, and mindfulness. They are making connections to their daily lives and most importantly, they are inspired to make better choices. They are building confidence and self-esteem and as a result, children are exploring, leading, and creating like never before.

We believe that we have created an environment where students are thriving. We have fostered a mutual respect, trust, and love of learning. Our children are happy and excited to be here, and they work hard to achieve success. We believe this has led to improved student outcomes as a result of increased student attendance, a decrease in at-risk behaviors, and an overall improvement in attitude, motivation and engagement.

We would like to be able to point to a specific curriculum, assessment, or set of data that has led to our success. While all are important, we believe that the foundation of a successful school begins with a strong climate and culture, and the social emotional health of all stakeholders. This is paramount to learning and, therefore, the most influential piece of what makes us successful.