

U.S. Department of Education
2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Mary Seidl

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

Official School Name Van Hise Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 246 S. Segoe Road

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

Madison City WI State 53705-4953 Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Dane County

Telephone (608) 204-4804

Fax

Web site/URL https://vanhise.madison.k12.wi.us/

E-mail mseidl@madison.k12.wi.us

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Jane Belmore

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail jbelmore@madison.k12.wi.us

District Name Madison Metropolitan School District Tel. (608) 663-1879

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. Jodie Thill

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

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

Date _____

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

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

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

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. 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):
- 32 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 12 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 7 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 51 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 | 38 | 43 | 81 |
| 1 | 37 | 42 | 79 |
| 2 | 41 | 35 | 76 |
| 3 | 42 | 31 | 73 |
| 4 | 32 | 33 | 65 |
| 5 | 38 | 27 | 65 |
| 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 | 228 | 211 | 439 |

*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
 - 18 % Asian
 - 4 % Black or African American
 - 7 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 63 % 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: 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.

| 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 | 31 |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year | 9 |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)] | 40 |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017 | 403 |
| (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: 26 %
113 Total number ELL

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

Arabic, Mandarin, French, Korean, Lao, Nepali, Spanish, Tibetan, Telugu, Other

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 18 %
Total number students who qualify: 80

8. Students receiving special education services: 11 %
48 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>20</u> Autism | <u>11</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>2</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>7</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>1</u> Developmental Delay | <u>1</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>24</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

| | Number of Staff |
|--|------------------------|
| Administrators | 1 |
| Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher. | 20 |
| 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. | 7 |
| Student support personnel e.g., school 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 22:1

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 | 95% | 92% | 96% | 95% | 44% |
| 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 all belong: VHE is committed to inclusive practices, rigorous learning, and collective efficacy to support participation for all in the life of our school.

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

Van Hise Elementary is a quiet K-5 neighborhood school in the University Hill Farms area on the near west side of Madison, Wisconsin. The campus is shared with Velma Hamilton Middle School. Van Hise Elementary serves 440 students, their families, and the surrounding community. The school is served by one bus with less than 75 students riding it daily, leaving the majority of over 350 walking to school. We have walking school buses that connect students to ensure their safety in commuting to and from Van Hise. Van Hise is truly a community school!

The Van Hise school community works to create an environment where all families and students experience a sense of belonging and fully participate in the life of the school. Built in 1957 and named after Charles R. Van Hise, our school is an inclusive and collaborative community where staff and parents partner to support student success. Our school's namesake is a person that is, in many ways, a little known hero of resource conservation. Charles R. Van Hise is probably known best for leading the University of Wisconsin-Madison during the Progressive Era at the birth of the 20th Century. Van Hise was also a major contributor to conservation in the United States and the world. His 1910 book, *Conservation of Natural Resources in the United States*, is recognized as one of the most important works in the history of conservation. It was the most respected, influential and often-cited general survey of conservation issues published in its time. In the book, Van Hise called for living in a way that does not diminish the quality of life for unborn generations. Further, he pointed the finger at individualism for depletion of natural resources.

In the spirit of Van Hise, the school continues to support a sense of community over individualism. Our community is diverse, with 25% of students identified as English Language Learners that speak over 20 languages. We foster relationships with all families that enable us to partner with families, ensuring that all students are academically engaged in rigorous learning. We work with families to support a shared understanding of how students learn. As a result, children excel at Van Hise in both math and reading across all grades. Teachers and staff are organized into highly effective teams with shared ownership for each and every one of our students. We utilize data-based decision making to support growth for all students.

In addition to our academic success, Van Hise also embraces our district Welcoming Schools curriculum. Welcoming Schools is a national program being used in the Madison Metropolitan School District to create more respectful and supportive schools for all students, staff and families. Professional development, lesson plans, books and inclusive language are provided around family diversity, gender and LGBTQ+ inclusion and preventing bias-based bullying.

At Van Hise our warm, inviting culture promotes positive relationships for children, families, and staff and community members. Our students and their families are engaged, happy and surrounded by excellent, caring educators. Our school supports the district's vision that all students acquire the skills and abilities needed to be successful, including a mastery of content areas, growth mindset, self-knowledge, creativity, wellness, interpersonal skills, confidence, cultural competence, and community connection. Through these skills and abilities, our students will graduate college, career, and community ready.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

At Van Hise we utilize a diversity of texts from a variety of publishers that are culturally and linguistically relevant to address the needs of our students, from emergent readers to advanced learners. Planning of whole group reading allows for instructional teams to work collaboratively using critical reading standards alongside reading behavior skill development appropriate for the grade level. These reading behaviors are incorporated into daily guided reading group lessons for strengthening and practice. During the workshop model, students have the opportunity to work with the teacher in small group, work in pairs, work with technology that supports literacy skill development, and work independently. For students who would benefit from more specified instruction to boost their reading skills, explicit phonics instruction is used.

Teachers work closely in collaboration with special education, English as a second language, advanced learning, and reading interventionist teachers and coaches to bolster our literacy instruction. All students receive the supports and scaffolds they need. Van Hise students are learning reading and writing skills that go across and throughout the content areas. Teachers weave a thread of literacy throughout students' instructional day.

Academic school goals are defined annually using our district benchmark assessments. VHE developed an electronic progress monitoring wall for each grade level to document standardized assessments quarterly and uses this in conjunction with daily formative assessments to monitor the progress of each student and inform instructional planning.

1b. Mathematics:

VHE math instruction is balanced between developing conceptual understanding and computational fluency. Teachers are intentional about how time is spent, how students are grouped, and how resources are used. In a balanced math classroom, “fair is not always equal.” This means students get what they need; not everyone gets the same. Students engage in deep learning around mathematical problems and refine the skills that will allow them to productively struggle with increasingly complex mathematical tasks.

Bridges in Mathematics is a comprehensive PK–5 curriculum that equips teachers to fully implement the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics in a manner that is rigorous, coherent, engaging, and accessible to all learners. The curriculum focuses on developing students' deep understandings of mathematical concepts, proficiency with key skills, and ability to solve complex and novel problems. Bridges blends direct instruction, structured investigation, and open exploration. It taps into the intelligence and strengths of all students by presenting material that is as linguistically, visually, and kinesthetically rich as it is mathematically powerful.

Students are assessed using not only our own Bridges curriculum but also district-used standardized tools. Teacher teams utilize the monthly unit assessments along with periodic number corner assessments. If advanced learning needs to be considered where compacting curriculum is necessary, teachers administer the comprehensive growth assessment which determines a student's areas of strength in end of year concepts. These tools are used to inform instructional practices and also provide data for teachers to flexibly group students across grade levels as appropriate. We provide a math block for grades 2 through 5 and grade acceleration when warranted.

1c. Science:

VHE science curriculum engages students in coherent, rigorous, and relevant instruction to more deeply understand the world around them. Hands on exploration with resources from the Full Option Science System (FOSS) curriculum fosters collaborative, inquiry based, interactive learning. FOSS curriculum is

hands on and experiential, providing tools and strategies to engage students and teachers in enduring experiences that lead to deeper understanding of the natural and designed worlds. Students learn their content through manipulation of materials from fabric, to wood, to water, to simple machines and pulleys. In large groups, small table groups, or thinking partnerships, students learn and work cooperatively as they grow their knowledge by making hypotheses and checking them through a variety of methods. Scientific knowledge advances when student scientists observe phenomena, think about how they relate to what is known, test their ideas in logical ways, and generate explanations that integrate the new information into understanding of the natural and designed worlds.

In addition to classroom science, at VHE students also participate in STEAM (Science, Technology, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) centers weekly. This instructional time serves as an access point for guiding student inquiry, dialogue, and critical thinking. Grades 2-5 also engage in a Genius Hour project second semester. Genius Hour is a movement that allows students to explore their own passions and encourages creativity in the classroom. It provides students a choice in what they learn during a set period of time during school. They choose a project with a focus on learn about, learn to do, learn to make, learn to create, learn to test, or learn to change. All students will research, produce a visual, and present to the class.

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

VHE social studies curriculum promotes civic competence by engaging students in coherent, rigorous, and relevant instruction to more deeply understand the world around them. Students engage in the history of our city, state, country, and the world at large. Teachers play an important role in preparing students to understand the intricacies of the social world and how we got to where we are today as a country. Our educators rely on a variety of resources to educate our students: textbooks, maps, online resources, guest speakers, field trips, and Time For Kids, as well as non-fiction literature. Students are able to explore the world around them and learn more about their families, friends, teachers, neighbors, and the world at large. Students learn that people live differently in different places within history.

Van Hise is committed to educating students to be thoughtful and welcoming members of our community. We use Welcoming Schools curriculum that supports ALL students and staff in learning how to welcome diverse families.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

Students who will attend VHE's kindergarten attend 4K at neighborhood preschools and public schools in alignment with MMSD's 4K model, which aligns with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards. It is play-based, research-based, and inclusive of culture, race, gender, languages, and promotes family partnerships. It is half-day, Tuesday-Friday. Pursuant to WI law, it is optional and tuition-free. About 75% of VHE students attend MMSD 4K programs. Others attend pre-school, home daycares, or are at home. Incoming 5K students attend our Kindergarten Round-Up in May to meet teachers, tour VHE, and complete various standardized assessments and observational measures that inform class placement.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Students at Van Hise in grades K - 5 thrive in a varied and rich visual and performing arts program. Our visual arts programming is grounded in expertise. Students meet one hour per week with their classroom and receive exceptional instruction that is frequently connected to learning targets pre-taught within their core classroom. Our visual arts program reflects our strong community connection. We have local artists that support our work by lending their skills to our springtime community arts event. Annually, our art program sponsors an Arts and Crafts fair in conjunction with our kindergarten Round-up. This fair has been ongoing since 2013 and offers local artists/makers both young and old a platform to display, sell, and inspire. It

provides funding for our art program supplies for the following year.

The music staff also work together to design a thoughtful, cohesive, and culturally relevant curriculum for all students. Students are engaged in active listening, reading, performing, creating, and responding to music from various cultures and genres in grades K - 5. Whether learning through movement, drumming, composing or improvising, music is a place where every student's critical thinking skills can grow and flourish. In twice weekly, 30-minute classes, students have collaborated with area arts organizations and artists, partnered with nationally recognized composers, and piloted innovative curriculums through leading arts organizations such as Carnegie Hall in NYC. Performance is an integrated and organic part of the music class experience, as students have opportunities to share what they know and can do with teachers, peers, parents, and the greater Hamilton/Van Hise community.

In addition to our visual and performing arts, our physical education (PE) program supports high-quality, standards-based curriculum and instruction three times a week for grades K-5 so that all students are empowered with the knowledge and skills necessary to be physically active and make healthy lifestyle choices to enhance their overall well-being. The PE curriculum includes units focused on educational games, gymnastics, dance, and fitness, and is taught using an approach that allows all students to be active and successful at their level of ability. The development of each child's character, teamwork, and fairplay are a priority during all lessons. Brain-based activities to enhance both motor skills and classroom learning are also integrated throughout many activities in the gym. Learning to move and moving to learn is our motto in the Van Hise gym!

An additional resource for all students, grades K-5, is the VHE library. Staff have access to an extensive media collection that is used to enrich classroom instruction and support the independent reading needs of students. Based on the international student body that Van Hise serves, our library contains materials in a variety of languages. The library's website is used by students, staff members, and families to access online resources during and after the school day. All kindergarten through fifth grade students visit the library on a weekly basis to learn information skills and check out books. The library program also sponsors a book bowl competition, provides a variety of materials for STEAM/makerspace centers, and hosts a yearly book fair.

3. Special Populations:

VHE has a strong history of using data-driven practices to identify students and groups of students that are under performing. Historically this has included African American and Hispanic students. Annually, focus groups are identified in our School Improvement Plan and root cause analysis is used to define strategies that will reduce gaps.

VHE prioritizes collaboration amongst the instructional, interventionist, coaches, and English Language and Cross Categorical teachers in order to accelerate each student's growth. Our universal systems include at least two shared planning times per week to enable teachers to collaborate around lesson planning, with one of those supported by an instructional coach. In addition to team support, the instructional coach provides individual coaching cycles as needed. Coaching support is also provided to teachers by our ELL and CC teachers and our Advanced Learner coach based on instructional needs and student data.

In addition to coaching, VHE also supports student growth using weekly Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) team meetings. This consists of the school principal, social worker, psychologist, instructional coach, reading interventionist, nurse, and a program support teacher from district student services using data to consider the academic, social-emotional, or behavioral supports needed for success. The team is joined by the speech and language therapist, ELL teachers, and advanced learning coach as needed.

Multiple data sources and assessments across grade levels are used to improve student and school performance and close gaps. Data sources include quantitative (PALS, Aimsweb, MAP, Text Reading Level, behavior referrals, etc) and qualitative (observations, teacher/parent/student narratives, etc.) sources. All assessment data is recorded using an electronic progress monitoring wall that staff have access to in order to plan for differentiated instruction.

Data is also used each semester to select students for interventions. The MTSS team prioritizes students performing below benchmark on two or more standardized assessments. Once identified, the interventionist selects a research-based reading program to match the needs of the student(s). The VHE reading interventionist is trained in a variety of research-based interventions including Tier 2 interventions (Leveled Literacy Intervention, Voyagers and Mondo Phonics Intervention) and Tier 3 interventions (Sunday Systems, Orton-Gillingham, etc.).

Students in intervention receive an individualized goal that is developed based on a growth-rate formula. Students are progress monitored weekly and data is shared with classroom teachers, the MTSS team, and parents regularly. Next steps for the intervention are decided based on data. If students are not making accelerated progress, a new research-based intervention may be selected, or the student may be referred for individual problem solving.

In addition to the MTSS Team, VHE is also served by a student support team (SST) that meets weekly. In addition to the MTSS team members, a student's classroom and ELL teachers and parents join SST. The purpose is to problem solve for individual student needs and develop action plans for success. Individual plans for students include a follow up to document progress and monitor as needed. Students may be referred based on teacher/parent recommendation or observed data concerns.

To support our commitment to being a community of learners, Van Hise practices full inclusion for all learners. With nearly one quarter of our students identified as English language learners and equally as many identified as advanced learners, Van Hise staff use multiple strategies to scaffold and support our learners to thrive! We provide varied access points into our lessons to individualize instruction as needed. We differentiate instruction by implementing the Wisconsin Delaware Arkansas (WIDA) Consortium framework and standards to accelerate English Language Learners' (ELLs) acquisition and use of English. Advanced learners are supported by teachers' differentiation. We consult with an on-site advanced learning coach to collaborate with teaching teams so that students may access replaced curriculum when appropriate, and we flexibly group students within and across grade levels.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

VHE’s school equity vision holds that: We all belong, and we are committed to inclusive practices, rigorous learning, and collective efficacy to support participation for all in the life of our school. Our school promotes a positive environment of rigorous academic, social, and emotional growth. We build staff and student competencies with feedback about behavioral choices and making behavioral changes to become contributing VHE members. We believe that social, emotional, and behavioral needs should be addressed through teaching, just like academic needs are addressed through teaching. Concepts are taught in a proactive restorative manner, versus reactively or punitively. Beyond teaching students about specific concepts, evidence-based, systems-wide strategies are implemented to promote growth for all. We teach and continuously reinforce our school-wide rules: Be Safe, Be Responsible, Be Respectful, Be an Ally.

Students learn quarterly school-wide Social Emotional Learning Standards (SELS) that support learning self-calming strategies, choices that promote Ally behavior, and strategies for peaceful problem solving. Beyond SELS themes, universal social emotional learning occurs through grade-level lessons from the Second Step and Welcoming Schools Curricula, both of which reinforce academic, social, and emotional growth through teaching students about skills for empathy, emotion management, problem solving, different types of families, and experiences of gender.

At VHE, a variety of strategies promote engagement and motivation, and reinforce social and emotional learning and growth. Student Leadership Team members bring student voice through participation in assemblies, assisting with incentive system data collection, and helping with new student tours. Cross-grade groups, called Hedgie Huddles, meet monthly to build relationships among children. Every staff member has a huddle that remains theirs for the entire time students are at VHE to support relationships across time.

Student climate is a reflection of staff climate. We work to support a culture and climate where all teachers feel like they belong and are valued. A team of staff, the “Care Team,” meets monthly to create and implement ways to support their colleagues with personal events, as well as to develop self-care activities for staff professional development, including monthly staff acknowledgements. At each professional development, staff have the opportunity to listen to each others’ leadership stories, in which a staff member shares their personal journey about why they chose to become an educator. Staff also have the opportunity to provide feedback and input through several venues, such as feedback sessions with the principal, membership on a school action team, and staff surveys. Staff also receive a variety of professional developmental opportunities to help improve academic, social, and emotional learning.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Family engagement strategies at Van Hise are grounded on a mutual respect that enables us to partner with families and the community to support student growth and achievement. We have developed strong two-way meaningful communication systems and partnerships to help us engage our learners in a culturally responsive manner.

At Van Hise, family voice is prioritized on multiple teams including our family and community engagement (FACE) team and School Based Leadership Team (SBLT). These teams meet to plan, implement, and reflect on our School Improvement Plan (SIP), which includes all of our family engagement activities. These events include academic success nights designed to provide families with a link to learning and a deeper understanding of curriculum by setting clear outcomes for learning for families. Families leave feeling confident and excited about supporting their children’s learning at home, and teachers gain a deeper understanding of their students to bolster their instructional engagement. VHE also hosts individual Ready, Set, Go conferences and an all school picnic prior to school starting, as well as November and April Conferences. There are also monthly PTO events, including a school dance, carnival, multicultural night, science night, and art fair.

In addition to school-wide events, families are invited to participate in a variety of classroom-based events such as “Author’s Tea,” classroom plays, and performances. All of our events serve to help students and their families experience a sense of belonging and purpose. We collect data at events that inform our practices and partner with families over time. This has resulted in support systems for families that truly level the playing field for all in our community.

In addition to partnerships with families, VHE also partners with community stakeholders. This includes a long-standing partnership with Midvale Lutheran Community Church, whose members work with us to provide volunteers across our school. Hamilton Middle School, which is located next to VHE, also serves as a source for student volunteers who often are alumni and work with our teachers to support younger learners. We also join other MMSD schools and the Madison Community Foundation to host a guest Principal annually. This opportunity pairs our school with local businesses to broaden our community involvement across multiple stakeholders.

Van Hise is an inclusive school that partners with families and the community to be involved in its learning, decisions, and success!

3. Professional Development:

Improvement through professional development tailored to specific VHE school goals is an expectation for all. The goals of the annual School Improvement Plan (SIP) identify areas for professional learning for the principal and staff leaders, with a focus on equity, instruction, and shared leadership. Principals learn from each other through monthly principal meetings and summer institutes provided by MMSD. These conversations, facilitated by MMSD, remain grounded in real school issues and adapt as the educational landscape changes throughout the year.

Based on the SIP, school data, and long-term vision, the school-based leadership team designs the annual Professional Learning Plan. This plan directs teachers through a progression of professional learning aligned to specific school improvement goals such as focusing on new knowledge, deepening understanding, and applying learning to practice. Professional learning plans are also informed by cross grade level action teams that implement our SIP.

Throughout the year, professional learning is provided in multiple formats. Monthly staff meetings, Action Team meetings, and district-wide professional development days provide staff with opportunities to explore educational strategies and plan collaborative implementation. Staff also routinely attend district sponsored trainings and bring the knowledge acquired back to our school. Personalized learning plans are also developed by staff to make their learning relevant to their needs and related to student achievement and growth. These plans are reviewed and approved by the principal.

In addition to professional learning meetings, there are also a range of coaching opportunities to support staff in skill development. The advanced learning coach, positive behavior support coach, and instructional coach each provide team and individual support to teachers by increasing their content, pedagogical knowledge base, and use of data to inform planning for instruction. Coaches also support staff application of new learning in the classrooms. Teachers, individually and in teams, target skills for student learning. Utilizing the Great Teaching Matters Framework (GTMF), teachers work with the coach to gather and analyze student data related to those skills, planning coherent, differentiated, standards-based instruction to improve their efforts. Coaches model best practice strategies and techniques, gather observational data, and provide teachers with feedback and opportunities for reflection. School “walk throughs,” conducted by the principal and SBLT, allow staff to examine data related to the implementation of the best practices at the school level.

4. School Leadership:

Our principal leads with a strong vision grounded in equity, data-based decision making, continuous improvement, and student voice. She believes that our work is inspirational and all staff need to carefully

consider their “why” for doing this work to motivate them to do their best. She inspires staff to share this vision to spur high achievement for everyone in the school community. She is insistent upon maintaining a shared equity vision that is widely communicated and understood. Our principal routinely provides performance feedback to staff that is reflective and focused on improvement toward our school goals.

In addition to performance feedback, our principal believes that shared leadership is critical to VHE’s success as a thriving school. Our school-based leadership team (SBLT) includes involvement of a grade level teacher, bilingual resource teacher, special educator, art teacher and two parent representatives. The SBLT works to define our school equity vision that drives our School Improvement Plan (SIP). This plan includes a set of well-defined goals for student success across all areas and examines data during the year to adjust and refine instructional approaches to meet those goals. The SBLT meets monthly to analyze data including feedback from teacher teams and action teams to support the SIP. In addition, the SBLT reads together text to support the continuing development of an equity lens that will support our gap closing work. The principal and SBLT members regularly communicate the goals and progress of the SIP to staff and families.

SBLT members facilitate teacher team meetings and serve as a source of two-way communication with teacher teams across the school. The SBLT also is aligned with the work of our school’s action teams. The action teams are driven by the School Improvement plan and include academic alignment, positive behavior support, and family and community engagement. All staff members serve on action teams that meet monthly.

The principal believes firmly that all students have the capacity to lead. The VHE Ally Team is a diverse group of student leaders representing multiple genders, home languages, abilities, and racial backgrounds. They meet regularly to create resources for younger students and plan positive celebrations for the school. In addition, the principal has built and maintained a system that supports each and every fifth grade student as a safety patrol. Patrols are seen as leaders and serve in a variety of roles to make VHE a caring, kind, inclusive school!

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

VHE is a vibrant, welcoming neighborhood school with multiple structures, systems, and instructional practices that support our success; however, what sets VHE apart and contributes to its accelerated, blue-ribbon performance is our deep commitment to building, nurturing, and supporting relationships. Relationships provide the foundation upon which all other successful practice is built.

While the strategies and goals of our school have been adjusted annually based on our data, our VHE equity vision of supporting our school as a place where all belong has remained consistent across time. This vision serves as our shared “why” for everything we do in our school. We believe that relationships in which all parties believe they belong are more effective and successful in meeting the needs of students and families.

To support the development of a sense of belonging for all, we use a variety of strategies. We implement curricula such as Welcoming Schools and Developmental Designs, develop an annual calendar of events informed and supported by staff and families, and create systems including MTSS, action teams, and SBLT.

We believe that strong relationships help us to foster a sense of belonging for all and also support our commitment to inclusive practices, rigorous learning, and collective agency. VHE has a long history of including all students to access high-quality core instruction. Students with various needs, including those with special education individual education plans, advanced learning needs, and English language learning needs, are instructed in their classroom, with scaffolds and supports provided to meet the needs of each student.

VHE has systems and structures that support data analysis to uphold rigorous learning standards for students with advanced learning needs. We employ systems including flexible grouping and grade level acceleration when appropriate. Doing this work well requires the solid relationships we have worked to build.

At VHE we believe that relationships support our collective agency. Our school community believes that doing our work together is the only way to do it well. Teachers, families, students, and our community working together make VHE the best school it can be!