

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2020 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[X] Choice

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

Official School Name Paul P. Gates Elementary School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 75 Spruce Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Acton State MA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 01720-2433

County Middlesex County

Telephone (978) 266-2570 Fax (978) 266-2573

Web site/URL http://www.gates.abschools.org E-mail lnewman@abschools.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 Light E-mail plight@abschools.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Acton-Boxborough Regional School District Tel. (978) 264-4700

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. Tessa McKinley  
(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. 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 2020 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 2014 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: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
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

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 6 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 8 TOTAL

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)  
 Suburban  
 Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	16	20	36
1	23	19	42
2	24	18	42
3	31	34	65
4	42	28	70
5	33	38	71
6	23	22	45
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
<b>Total Students</b>	192	179	371

\*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
  - 56.9 % Asian
  - 2.7 % Black or African American
  - 5.1 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 30.7 % White
  - 4.6 % 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 2018 - 2019 school year: 5%

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, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	9
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	11
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	20
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	371
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

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

Arabic, Armenian, Bengali, Chinese, French, Hindi/Indian/Urdu, Hungarian/Magyar, Japanese, Korean, Malayalam, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Telugu, Tibetan/Bod Skad, and Urdu

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 12 %  
43 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 13 %

Total number students who qualify: 50

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %

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>2</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>5</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>9</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>12</u> Developmental Delay    | <u>7</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>5</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: 12

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	17
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	9
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	20
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	7

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.

<b>Required Information</b>	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	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 2019.

<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.

At the Gates School, we are motivated by our core values: Generosity, Acceptance, Trust and Respect, Enthusiasm, and Scholarship. We believe that each of our students feels loved, valued, challenged, and supported by all members of the Gates School community. Together we are growing a caring community.

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

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School District has elementary school open enrollment within the district, whereby families choose between six elementary schools. This allows us to balance class sizes in each grade level across the district in ways that neighborhood schools would not. Incoming kindergarten families tour each of the six elementary schools in Acton and Boxborough from January - February. These families submit a prioritized list of preferred schools and their names are put into a lottery. Because we have six elementary schools, most families receive their first choice school. There is a limited number of students allowed at each school to prevent overcrowding. If all families in Acton and Boxborough wanted to attend a particular school, the number of students would be limited based on the number of classroom sections being offered in a school year. If the school is full, then families are placed at their second choice school. These families are then placed on waiting lists and have the opportunity to transfer to their first choice school as space allows. New families that move into the district during the school year have limited choices and are given the opportunity to attend schools that have available space.

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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The Acton-Boxborough Regional School District adopted core values to guide the educational experience of AB students PreK-12. Wellness, Equity, and Engagement are the three domains prioritized. For wellness, we partner with families to prioritize social-emotional wellness, which is necessary for learning and developing resilience. For equity, we ensure all students have equitable access to programs and curricula to reach their potential. And for engagement, we provide engaging educational opportunities where students develop passion and joy for learning.

Under this districtwide umbrella are Gates School's core values: Generosity, Acceptance, Trust, and Respect, Enthusiasm, and Scholarship. Helping students know and understand these core values has been a priority. Generosity is encouraged with time and resources. The 6th Grade Community Service program pairs students with teachers throughout the school. 6th-grade students volunteer to help in the school during one or two recess periods per week. Students have helped in younger grade physical education classes, helped in the library, assisted in art classes, and worked with small groups of students in the classroom. Students and teachers helped to make this a successful experience for students and a certificate of Community Service was issued to the participating students.

Each spring, Gates hosts an open house evening in which parents of incoming Kindergarten students can visit the school and learn about the school community. Highlights of the evening include school produced videos, the introduction of administration and staff, as well as Parent Teacher Organization representatives. Parents tour the school and have the opportunity to ask questions, view the curriculum, and learn about extra activities that support the elementary experience K-6.

Gates' diverse student population is celebrated at all opportunities. For example, over the years, families have donated country-of-origin flags that are displayed in the cafeteria, hanging from the high ceiling around the perimeter. Each year the Gates community is invited to Dances of the World, a special evening of student dance performances. Cultural diversity is interwoven through all aspects of the Gates community experience: School Council Membership, Parent Teacher Organization leadership, and staffing positions.

Acceptance of all students is celebrated at Gates. We are proud to house two types of special education programs: a K-3 resource program and three learning centers. Additionally, over the past few years, the staff has participated in Responsive Classroom workshops. As a Responsive Classroom school, teachers provide students with frequent opportunities that help all students feel valued and accepted. Each classroom has a scheduled morning meeting which includes key activities: greeting each student, reading the teacher's morning message, and reviewing the schedule for the day. In addition, the yearly theme of Growing a Caring Community is used to create opportunities throughout the year to celebrate the many ways we care about one another.

Interactions within the Gates school community foster trust and respect. Teachers work with students to develop classroom rules at the beginning of the school year. Time is spent to discuss the reason for rules and how classroom rules can help students succeed. School-wide rules are adopted and posted throughout the school. The Gates School rules are: Be Respectful, Be Kind, Be Safe, Try your best. Every opportunity is provided to help students understand these rules and when issues arise, these rules guide the problem-solving process and outcomes. Student Council leads the school with a variety of community service projects throughout the year. Gates students take pride in giving back to our community.

It is often said at Gates that we work hard and we play hard. The Gates School is very enthusiastic. Each year, the school year begins with an outdoor Gates Pep Rally where we introduce classrooms, sing the school song, students dance on the basketball court, and the Principal welcomes everyone back to school and gives highlights of the coming year. There are many fun programs and activities throughout the year (e.g. classroom field trips, Ice Cream Social, Activity Day, library book challenge, and author visits) that foster enthusiasm and school connection. The year concludes with the whole school sixth-grade send-off, which acknowledges the sixth-grade students. One highlight of the send-off is a guest speaker, a former Gates student who is graduating from the high school, who joins the celebration to give an uplifting speech

to the exiting 6th graders.

Finally, Gates is proud of the many ways we promote scholarship. Gates holds students to high standards and provides support as needed to help students meet these standards. Teachers are well versed in state and national curriculum standards. As part of a schoolwide transition to a standards-based report card, teachers spent time working with colleagues to understand the frameworks and identify the specific standards that were included on the report card. Curriculum and benchmark assessment consistency across grade levels was adopted to support student learning. Gates now has K-6 math, reading, and writing programs, a K-3 phonics program, and Grades 1-6 Fountas and Pinnell reading benchmark assessment. Additionally, after receiving six hours of professional learning on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), teachers are starting to re-design their lessons to ensure multiple means of representation, various ways for students to interact with materials to show what they have learned (Action and Expression), and student engagement in the learning process. As a result of these efforts, student scholarship has flourished.



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

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

**1a.** Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

Gates adopts a holistic approach to instruction and curriculum across all subject domains. This overarching philosophy is evident throughout the school community. Each spring, a comprehensive school schedule, which maximizes teaching and learning, is created for the following school year. All stakeholders provide input in order to facilitate student programs, weekly specials, and whether support services occur in the general education classroom or in a separate setting. Our school schedules include specific intervention blocks for small group reteach opportunities and special education services such as occupational, physical, and speech therapy.

Additionally, classroom memberships are carefully created through the placement process. Sending classroom teachers collaborate across the grade level and with service delivery providers to group students based on the social, emotional, and learning needs of each student. Heterogeneously balanced classrooms are the goal.

The Principal and Assistant Principal embrace a system that maximizes interactions with teachers and students. Teacher observations and evaluations are evenly distributed. Each administrator follows a grade level from kindergarten to sixth grade. For example, the Principal followed grades 2, 4, and 6, and the Assistant Principal had grades K, 1, 3, and 5. These assignments alternate each year, giving each administrator the opportunity to focus attention on the progress of students. In addition, they observed and evaluated teachers associated with their grade-level assignments. Weekly grade-level collaboration meetings give teachers and administrators the opportunity to share student data, discuss concerns, and problem solve issues as needed. Daily walk-throughs with follow-up discussions round out classroom connections. Short, frequent visits, in addition to the longer classroom observations, provide a lens through which administrators facilitate best teaching and learning practices.

Maximum effort throughout the Gates community is devoted to student success. Our diverse population and changing demographics have helped us rethink how we ensure that students come ready to learn.

### **1b.** Reading/English language arts

In language arts, teachers use a variety of resources such as Words Their Way, Foundations phonics program, a rich classroom library, a school-wide guided reading library collection of fiction and non-fiction text, Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD), Lucy Calkins Units of Writing, Empowering Writers, Six Traits, and district-developed curriculum using the latest research on the science of reading.

They employ whole-class and small group instruction for both reading and writing. For the past five years, classroom teachers and special educators have partnered to learn and implement SRSD. Writing prompts are utilized as is the writing process in which students receive feedback on their drafts to edit and revise. Students gradually assume more independence in the writing process as they use the tools associated with SRSD. Whole-class and small group reading instruction is utilized, and independent, pleasure reading is strongly encouraged. Short, grade level, content-specific articles, and primary and secondary sources are used in social studies and science, technology, and engineering for whole-class readings where appropriate scaffolding for students is employed. Small group instruction includes both guided and strategy focused groupings. Reading Specialists and a Reading Assistant work closely with classroom teachers to assess student reading and provide support both in and out of the classroom. A question about the familial history of learning difficulties was added to the DIAL-4 kindergarten screening, as well as to the developmental history/home assessment used in all initial special education evaluations, the RAN (Rapid Automated Naming) Task - (colors/objects) is part of the kindergarten literacy screening, and a kindergarten protocol document is used to compile information to inform kindergarten teachers as students transition into the school district. The Boston Children's Early Literacy Screener (Early Bird) is currently being piloted in

kindergarten. Additional assessments include Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System, Foundations assessments, Words Their Way assessments, Running Records, district writing rubrics and SRSD rubrics, and exemplar pieces of writing for the three types of writing.

### **1c. Mathematics**

Go Math! is the Gates current mathematics K-6 curriculum. Next year, the school will participate in the beta pilot of Illustrative Mathematics (IM), which is more closely aligned to the district's core values of wellness, equity, and engagement and its goals around inclusive practices, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and social-emotional learning (SEL) instruction. Our overarching aim is to lay a foundation of great materials in every classroom so teachers can focus on making those materials work for the students they know best. Implementing high quality, universally designed, culturally sustaining, behaviorally supported, and evidenced-based classroom materials are part of the work to build a System of Aligned Supports (SAS) at the school level. The indicators that set IM apart are those for accessibility for students and usability for teachers. IM provides lesson and unit-level UDL considerations and supports student SEL. IM also has structures embedded in each lesson to support all learners. A parttime mathematics assistant is available to work directly with students. A STEAM coach also partners with classroom teachers to support them in the following ways: support implementation of new/improved teaching strategies, plan assessment and instruction using the MA Curriculum Frameworks and a variety of resources, think about how to create appropriate learning targets for students, collect and analyze various evidence of student learning to support instructional decision-making, co-teach and debrief a shared lesson, and continue to build knowledge of content and pedagogy.

Gates teachers have taken part in many professional learning workshops and opportunities that have focused on the mathematical practices, the use of open-ended tasks, fostering a mathematics growth-mindset for students, using 3-act tasks and other mathematical routines, promoting mathematical discussions, and understanding how mathematical concepts build from grade to grade.

### **1d. Science**

After the release of the NextGeneration Science Standards (MA STE Frameworks), the district spent four years developing science investigations. This included many research and development projects that included the science coordinator, STEAM coaches, classroom teachers, special educators, and English language educators. The result is a highly sequenced set of investigations at each grade level that address the standards in each STE strand (physical science, life science, and earth and space science) and the big ideas. Each investigation starts with an essential question, timeframe, rationale, and performance expectations. The investigations are built on the 5E Inquiry Model (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate). Student choice is embedded throughout the investigation both for the teacher and students. Clear engagement expectations and assessment instruments are also articulated. Supporting documents include Unpacking the Performance Expectations (the Practices, Disciplinary Core Ideas, and Crosscutting Concepts), a list of possible field trips, UDL practices to support the investigation, academic language, resources and activities for building academic language, and all the materials necessary for the investigation. The natural environment is accessed and utilized extensively throughout many of the investigations and include observation (and scientist notebooks), nature walks, and outdoor play spaces. The district has set short- and long-term STEAM goals for all six of the elementary schools. During the 2019-20 school year, with the collaboration of the Lesley University STEAM Learning, all students in the school participated in a STEAM Fair. The district and school celebrated STEAM learning as part of a statewide effort to boost the interest, awareness, and ability for all learners to envision themselves in STEAM learning opportunities.

### **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement**

With the release of the new Massachusetts History and Social Science Frameworks, the district is currently making adjustments to existing units of study and creating new units. These adjustments and creations will incorporate UDL principles of representation, engagement, and expression, as well as the Teaching Tolerance Social Justice Standards. The district has created a three-year implementation plan to minimize gaps as students move through the grades.

For the past three years, the district has supplied money to every classroom teacher, special educator, psychologist, counselor, and reading specialist to build classroom libraries that are more representative of the students served (windows and mirrors) and highlight characters who persevere, problem-solve, think creatively, overcome adversity, etc. (doors). Technology enhances student learning about themselves and others, for example exploring other places through the use of Google Virtual Field Trips and accessing maps and globes that provide multiple perspectives. Primary and secondary sources are used as whole class readings that are scaffolded for students. Visual Arts and Performing Arts specialists often collaborate with grade-level teachers to expose students to the arts of the culture or region studied.

**1f. For secondary schools:**

**1g. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:**

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

The Gates visual art curriculum is based on a learner-directed, choice-based model called Teaching for Artistic Behavior or TAB. Every student attends art once per week. A choice-based art program means students in art will be introduced to and allowed to choose from a variety of centers like drawing, collage, painting, sculpture, fiber, printmaking, and clay. The goal is to offer a program where students are encouraged to assume creative control of their art and art-making processes within an environment designed to support individual inquiry and the development of artistic behavior. In a choice-based classroom, it is the individual student, not the teacher who defines the project. Teachers instead function as facilitators, mentors, instructors, and motivators depending on the observed need, circumstance, and interest of the students. The Gates Art Curriculum is also taught based on the concept of the Studio Habits of Mind where students develop their artistic hands, minds, heart, & world. Throughout the year, all students work in various 2D & 3D media while practicing the Studio Habits of Mind in their art-making process. Students are encouraged to think creatively, ask questions of themselves and others, and make meaning out of their artistic experiences in the art room. In the primary grades, students are introduced to the concept of the Studio Habits of Mind through singing and interpreting a song called I'm an Artist. Students work on practicing using their artistic hands, brain, heart, and world throughout the year. In the upper grades, students go into greater depth to understand the Studio Habits of Mind and implement them into their art-making process. By 5th grade, students set goals for themselves based on a particular habit and track their progress through student-teacher conferences, self-reflection, and assessments.

In the Gates music program, all students participate in a weekly general music class for 45 minutes. In addition, students in Kindergarten, Grades 1, 2, 3, and 4 attend music for a 10 week Rotation period. Students in Grades 5 and 6 participate in the Music Enrichment Period. It is scheduled from 8:50 to 9:50 and includes the Gates Elementary Band, Orchestra, and Chorus.

The Gates PE and Health curriculum is based on the National standards which define what a student should know and be able to do as a result of a quality physical education program and as such are guided by the following five standards: Standard 1: The physically literate individual demonstrates competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns; Standard 2: The physically literate individual applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies, and tactics related to movement and performance; Standard 3: The physically literate individual demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness; Standard 4: The physically literate individual exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others; and Standard 5: The physically literate individual recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and/or social interaction.

Students attend library once per week, and technology is integrated throughout the disciplines with the

support of a technology integration assistant and a STEAM coach. Students are exposed to and use student search tools (e.g. Infobits, Sweet Search, Pixabay, Kiddle), assessment, study tools (e.g. Quizlet, Kahoot, Poll Everywhere), and online presentation and collaboration tools (e.g. Thinglink, Padlet, Voki, Powtoon). Students in grades K-2 have access to iPads and starting in grade 3 students begin to use ChromeBooks and Google Classroom. Library media specialists and digital literacy specialists have been building a K-6 districtwide curriculum.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level**

Classroom teachers use a variety of formal and informal assessments to monitor student skills and understandings. Teachers employ Universal Design for Learning strategies, use multimodal approaches, and create ICAPs (Individual Curriculum Achievement Plans) to help students access and learn grade-level material within the classroom. Each teacher uses classroom technology such as a Smartboard, video examples, audiobooks, Chromebooks, and educational software to enhance instruction. In addition, teachers reteach and review concepts in small instructional groups for students who are struggling to learn grade-level standards.

Additionally, there are a number of individuals who support students that include the following: Reading and Math Specialists, who work with students who struggle in math and/or reading; a school counselor, who checks in with students who need support with emotional regulation, self-esteem, and more; and a BCBA, who works with teachers to observe/develop behavior support plans for students with behavior concerns.

Some students may still struggle despite these classroom interventions. Students for whom teachers have academic, behavioral, and/or emotional concerns are referred to the Child Study Team (CST), which reviews each student's areas of strength and any area(s) of concern. The teacher shares student assessment data, instructional strategies that have been implemented, parent concerns, and anecdotal observations with the CST Team members, who review the referral information and visit the classroom to observe the student. The CST develops an intervention plan for the next six weeks to support the student. During these six weeks, the teacher implements strategies, collects additional data, and discusses concerns with parents. At the follow-up meeting, the teacher shares the new data, and the CST determines the next steps.

#### **3b. Students performing above grade level**

Teachers strive to provide the right level of challenge for each of their students. To accomplish this goal, they collect student data using a variety of formal and informal assessment tools. Teachers use the data to guide their instructional practices. All students need to be actively engaged in their learning, and it is critical that teachers meet the individual needs of all students. A differentiated curriculum allows for additional enrichment challenges for students who demonstrate mastery of curriculum concepts.

When teachers teach reading, they give their students the Fountas and Pinnell assessment several times throughout the school year to identify students' instructional reading levels and monitor progress. Using a tiered approach, students read different books for instruction because each student reads and learns at his or her instructional level. During math instruction, teachers provide whole-class instruction and also work with students in small groups or individual students. Groups are flexible, and classroom centers offer students the opportunity to extend their thinking.

Teachers encourage students to design passion projects, where they choose a project focus that they are excited about learning. Passion projects encourage students to take charge of their own learning, which allows students who are performing above grade level academic challenges inspirational learning opportunities. These self-directed projects are student-chosen and include a research project and classwide presentation. Topics of interest have ranged from paper airplane design, how to make a comic book, parts of the brain, and researching a medical diagnosis. The students are extremely invested in their topics, and are proud to present their new learnings to their peers.

### **3c. Special education**

Gates Elementary houses one K-3 Resource Program that provides intensive and specially designed instruction for students who require additional support within the general education classroom and/or accommodations or modifications to the curriculum. The Resource Program emphasizes the development of self-advocacy skills, greater independence, and responsibility for learning. In the future, the district plans to expand the resource program at Gates to include grades 4-6. Gates is also home to three Learning Centers that provide services to students with a variety of disabilities. Students who receive Learning Center support participate fully in general education with accommodations and specially designed instruction to address individual needs.

Students with IEPs are supported through a variety of teaching models such as whole group instruction, flexible grouping, small group instruction, and individualized instruction. Students receive a range of services from accommodations in general education classes to more supported programming in substantially separate, co-taught, and learning center models. Gates special education staff currently includes one IEP team chairperson, four special education teachers, eight special education assistants, one school psychologist, two speech-language pathologists, and part-time board-certified behavior analyst (BCBA), occupational therapist (OTs), and physical therapists (PTs).

### **3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered**

The English Language Education (ELE) program's goal is to develop both social and more complex academic language skills that enable students to perform independently at grade level. Students' needs are met with a combination of in-class support and pull-out, small group sessions. The elementary certified teachers support English learners (ELs) to develop proficiency in listening, reading, writing, and speaking within the context of the general education curriculum. ELE teachers communicate regularly with classroom teachers to review upcoming curriculum themes and content objectives in order to provide students with structured language development work in the context of those themes. ABRSD's ELE program provides services to students whose first languages include dozens of world languages.

### **3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered**

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

At the Gates School, the Responsive Classroom is used as an approach to teaching that focuses on helping students develop their academic, social, and emotional skills in a learning environment where students can do their best learning. During the first six weeks of school, all teachers begin the school year by asking their students to reflect on their successes and challenges from the previous year and to name the things they are most looking forward to accomplishing this year. Students select individual hopes and dreams and the classroom teacher builds on these goals by asking the class what rules they will need in the classroom so that everyone is able to achieve their hopes and dreams. By going through this process all classrooms are able to generate their own classroom rules that best support students' learning. As a Gates School community, we reviewed all of the individual classroom rules to establish the following Gates School rules: Be respectful, Be kind, Be safe, and Try your best. Our goal is to standardize our approach to positive discipline to create a safe, calm, and respectful school climate based on a deep respect for all members of the Gates School community. The Gates School is built upon core values consisting of generosity, acceptance, trust & respect, enthusiasm, and scholarship.

To best support the health and well-being of our students, we continue to help students develop a positive growth mindset. A growth mindset is a belief that one's intelligence can be grown or developed with persistence, effort, and a focus on learning. Individuals with a growth mindset believe they are capable of learning nearly anything if they work hard and accept failures and challenges as opportunities to grow. Our goal is to provide all students the opportunity to develop a growth mindset through identifying strategies for self-regulation, engagement, and motivation so they can learn effectively. We also incorporate movement breaks, as well as mindfulness activities with our students. When teachers implemented mindfulness activities during transition times, such as returning from lunch and recess, students reported their bodies felt calm and they were ready to learn. We have also found that by incorporating Responsive Classroom energizers and frequent movement breaks that students are refreshed and focused on learning during the school day.

Most importantly, our students need to feel loved, valued, challenged, and supported by all of the adults in the Gates School community. We are proud to engage, motivate, and provide our students with a positive learning environment that supports the academic, social and emotional growth of all of our students.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

The Gates School PTO and Gates School Council are two important groups that have made the greatest impact for student success and school improvement at the Gates School. The Gates PTO is a volunteer-run organization of parents, guardians, teachers, and administrators. The PTO meets regularly, which provides the administration with the opportunity to share academic achievements and challenges with parents. The Gates PTO funds and supports programs and materials above and beyond those afforded by the town budget, supplementing and supporting the school curriculum and cultural growth. The PTO budget continues to enhance the Gates community and experience for students and families. Each year, the PTO brings an author to visit the school to inspire our students, they provide financial support for classroom assistants, enrichment performances at school assemblies, and field trip scholarships for students whose families cannot afford them. The PTO understands the value of "growing a caring community" and hosts the annual Gates Culture Showcase. The Culture Showcase is a special event that celebrates the diversity of the Gates School community. Students are encouraged to share their culture through dance, song, food, and traditional clothing. It is a memorable evening where the Gates School community comes together as one. The Gates School PTO plays an active and generous role in providing support to the Gates community.

The Gates School Council is composed of parents, teachers, and community members. The school council assists the principal in adopting educational goals for the school that are consistent with local educational policies and statewide student performance standards. They work towards identifying the educational needs of students attending the school. The council also reviews the annual school building budget. Additionally,

the Gates School Council formulates a School Improvement Plan each year by examining the academic, social and emotional well being of the Gates School community. Our most recent School Improvement Plan identified the need for students to develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success, to ensure all students have access to programs and curricula to reach their potential and to adopt a new reading assessment in order to better inform instructional practices and to provide meaningful instruction that meets the diverse needs of all students. Academic achievements and challenges are regularly discussed during School Council meetings and minutes from each meeting are shared with families on the school website.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

Many years ago, the Gates School staff worked together to establish our Gates School Norms. Our school norms played a critical role in creating a respectful community environment. The Gates Norms include: speaking directly and respectfully to whom you have an issue; respectfully listening to and discussing ideas and concerns of others mindful of the need for confidentiality; accepting final decisions and following transparent decision-making processes. Transparency includes considering who will make the decision, how the decision will be made, and how it will be communicated. Most importantly, our school norms expect that we remain mindful that we are all operating with good intentions.

With our school norms firmly in place, our school was ready to “Grow a Caring Community through Civility, Respect & Kindness.” Growing a caring community exemplifies the spirit of the Gates School. The Gates staff operates as a team, with shared educational goals for our students. To best support teachers, we provide regular districtwide, grade-level, school-based, and department professional learning opportunities. We provide teachers with educational resources and regular, collaborative opportunities with colleagues.

Our caring community extends to our students and their families. We believe that civility is learned through respectful relationships and actions. With this goal, we wanted to give our students and staff the opportunity to participate in a variety of community service projects and activities that foster trust, kindness, and respect. Growing a caring community was our opportunity to support the Gates core values: generosity, acceptance, trust and respect, enthusiasm, and scholarship. The Gates School is more than a school, it is a family.

As a staff, we decided it was time to work towards becoming a Responsive Classroom community. Everyone was excited to pursue the Responsive Classroom training and professional development. What we didn't realize was how this commitment would positively impact our staff and our students. All staff members were given the opportunity to participate in a 4-day summer workshop. We quickly began to realize that we all needed to fully commit to the Responsive Classroom practices and we carefully paced ourselves to make the necessary changes. We provide teachers professional learning, combined with ongoing support and encouragement. When teachers asked for resources, the answer was always yes. We continue to work on our lofty goal of becoming a Responsive Classroom community and are thrilled to know that we have created a safe, joyful, and engaging learning community where all staff and students have a sense of belonging and feel significant.

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

Our goal in the Acton Boxborough Regional School district is that each of our students feels loved, valued, challenged, and supported by all staff members in the A-B schools. At the Gates School, we share this philosophy and are motivated by our core values: generosity, acceptance, trust and respect, enthusiasm, and scholarship. The Gates School is a diverse learning community and we understand that all of our students need to feel safe, loved, and supported to achieve success. The Gates School has a strong leadership team, where the Principal and the Assistant Principal work closely together to support student learning. We meet each week with our collaborative grade-level teams to review assessment data, discuss curriculum and instruction, and share the academic and social-emotional concerns of our students. The Principal, and Assistant Principal value trusted relationships with staff, students, and families.

At the Gates School, we have learned that student achievement is possible when students have the necessary social-emotions skills such as problem-solving, self-regulation, impulse control, and empathy. The Gates

teachers participated in a book study that informed current thinking regarding the emotional well being of students. There is compelling evidence that students may be struggling with emotional regulation, which impacts their ability to focus on learning. Teachers read and discussed social-emotional topics such as difficult behaviors, anxiety, and depression. Our goal was to better understand the causes and patterns of difficult behaviors and identify strategies for getting all students back on track so that they can learn effectively. Reading *The Behavior Code: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Teaching the Most Challenging Students* by Jessica Minahan and Nancy Rappaport helped us to better understand what drives patterns of behavior through observations and discussions with colleagues to foster shared responsibility of all students. We developed intervention procedures that we could implement within the classroom and throughout the school.

We have expanded our support services to best meet the needs of our students and families. Each week our CARE committee, composed of the Principal, Assistant Principal, nurse, counselor, and psychologist meet to discuss shared concerns for students. The Family Success Partnership allows the Gates School to provide referrals for families that are in need of innovative, collaborative, and preventative wraparound services. We also work closely with the Acton Food Pantry and offer weekend food bags to support families with struggling food insecurity, and we are proud to offer a variety of support services and resources for our families. We understand that our trusted family partnerships are an investment in our students' achievement.



## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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The one practice that has been the most instrumental to the Gates School's success has been the implementation of Responsive Classroom. In 2015, The Gates Staff discussed the need to adopt a program that would best support a social-emotional learning approach to teaching and discipline. We didn't realize at that time how much Responsive Classroom would positively impact instruction, classroom management, discipline, and help us build a positive school community.

We began our journey by offering all staff the opportunity to participate in a 4-day summer workshop as well as purchasing all staff members a copy of *The First Six Weeks of School* which helped us to focus on creating a climate of warmth, inclusion, and safety. During the first six weeks of our school year, all teachers worked on developing classroom routines and behavior expectations. It was important to help students to get to know and care for their classroom and school environment, as well as establishing expectations for academic work. Not all teachers were able to attend the summer workshop, but those who did assume a leadership role in the implementation of Responsive Classroom. We realized that we would need to set annual goals as we worked towards providing consistent expectations with our students.

We continued to offer the summer workshop opportunities for classroom teachers and were delighted when the art, music, and PE teachers asked to attend this workshop. The school guidance counselor, special educators, and therapists were also eager to participate in Responsive Classroom training. Our next goal was to standardized our approach to positive discipline with a common vocabulary and set of procedures at recess, in the cafeteria, and during our bus dismissal. A school-wide plan was developed that provided practical strategies for building a safe, calm, and respectful school climate.

Our Responsive School journey has not ended. Five years later the Gates staff and students continue to learn and grow. All classroom teachers provide students with common classroom practices. The Gates School is proud to offer engaging academics that promote curiosity, wonder, and interest. We have created a positive community that is safe, predictable, and where all students have a sense of belonging. Our learning environment is calm and promotes responsibility and high engagement in learning. We truly believe that much of our success at the Gates School is our shared commitment to becoming a Responsive Classroom school community.