

**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 [ ] Choice

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

Official School Name Maria Hastings Elementary School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 7 Crosby Road  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Lexington State MA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 02421-7405

County Middlesex County

Telephone (781) 860-5800 Fax (781) 860-5242

Web site/URL https://www.lexingtonma.org/hastings-elementary/ E-mail llipsitz@lexingtonma.org

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. Julie Hackett E-mail jhackett@lexingtonma.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Lexington Public Schools Tel. (781) 861-2580

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. Kathleen Lenihan  
(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)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 9 TOTAL

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

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. 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	30	33	63
1	35	32	67
2	45	43	88
3	43	32	75
4	42	37	79
5	47	35	82
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
<b>Total Students</b>	242	212	454

\*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
  - 44.5 % Asian
  - 1.8 % Black or African American
  - 4.4 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 40.3 % White
  - 9 % 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: 9%

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	23
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	16
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	39
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	454
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.09
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	9

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

Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Danish, Dravidian, French, German, Greek, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Indonesian, Indo-European, Japanese, Kannada, Korean, Ganda, Malayalam, Marathi, Nepali, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Telugu, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 16 %  
73 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 5 %

Total number students who qualify: 24

8. Students receiving special education services: 19 %

84 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>27</u> Autism                 | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>7</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>10</u> Developmental Delay    | <u>9</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>4</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>23</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>2</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	4
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	21
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	23
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	37
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

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 21:1

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	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

The vision of the Maria Hastings School is to promote our district mission: "Joy in learning, curiosity in life and compassion in all we do". Our community strives to guide the development of every student towards reaching their academic potential, their social/emotional development, and their ability to become engaged citizens of the world.

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

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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Maria Hastings Elementary School is located in Lexington, Massachusetts. Where the American Revolution began, Lexington has a rich history and a diverse population. The Hastings School includes students living in public housing, as well as multi-million dollar homes. We have a population of students for whom English is a second language, with 28 different languages spoken in their homes. Families arrive and depart throughout the year, depending upon the school calendar in their home country. Our multicultural community enriches our school and helps to build bridges between international and American educational systems. Using a diversity, equity, and inclusion focus, we strive to unify the many cultures represented in our school community.

The foundation of our program is built upon the premise that every child can grow academically, socially and emotionally; and that the general education classroom is the central learning environment for all students. Inclusion is viewed as a starting point at Hastings. Using the tenets of Carol Dweck's growth mindset, teachers consider the unique needs of every student and differentiate instruction to guide learners' growth. Hastings educators work collaboratively in grade-level teams, with specialist colleagues and across grades to modify curricula for students. Children are placed in clusters so that co-teaching in literacy or math can be effectively implemented or ELL teachers can provide support in the classroom setting. Teachers create student groups across classrooms at a single grade level to provide challenging tasks or additional support. Our school of 454 students (as of October 1, 2019), is also home to a district-wide special education program for 34 children with pragmatic language needs or autism spectrum disorder. All of the children are fully integrated into general education classrooms and supported by a team of special educators, speech/language pathologists, counselors, and skilled assistants.

Using a Positive Behavior Intervention Support model, the Hastings Hero is a student who is respectful, responsible, safe, determined, and kind. Hero behaviors are evident throughout the school: adults step aside and fifth-grade students lead the All School Meeting twice a month; classes are matched across grade levels to create student buddies; fourth-grade students complete weekly recycling responsibilities; and all students contribute to our annual food drive. Students earn Hero tickets that count towards school-wide celebrations focusing on community-building instead of individual recognition.

Hastings School provides further support by assigning staff mentors to students at risk, building adult-child relationships outside the evaluative classroom setting. Custodians, office staff, and assistants join teachers in mentoring students. Our counselors teach lessons in all grades and join classroom teachers when specific issues arise. Maximizing in-house expertise, last year a team of Hastings educators trained other staff in Restorative Justice Practices while continuing to grow their own capacity. These practices are now used with students to respond to situations when negative interactions between peers occur.

Staff learning is at the core of the Lexington Public Schools. Teachers receive peer mentoring in their first three years with the district. Grade level colleagues meet weekly in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) to analyze student data, identify trends and areas for reteaching, and build a professional culture that promotes celebrating successes and sharing vulnerabilities. Curriculum specialists in both literacy and math establish coaching cycles that provide all teachers, regardless of their years of experience, time to collaborate with a coach. Over the course of the year, teacher/administrator teams meet to discuss student needs and plan intervention groups. The weekly schedule includes noon release for students on Thursdays, allowing for afternoon professional learning. This year our school staff read portions of *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* by Zaretta Hammond and met in small groups to reflect on the text. Teachers meet within schools, in-district teams, and across areas of expertise to deepen their understanding of effective instructional practices. The school system also provides professional learning for assistants and clerical staff, demonstrating a strong commitment to continuous growth for both students and adults.

The Principal, Assistant Principal, and Evaluation Team Supervisors practice distributive leadership. Their approach to leading the school and solving problems is collaborative and team-oriented. A twenty-person Equity Team serves as a leadership group, planning and facilitating workshops for school staff. This year, they read and discussed *The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice* by Fania Davis, and strengthened

their relationships in order to promote candid dialogue among all staff members.

The Maria Hastings School is a building in the midst of another transformative change. We recently moved into a new facility and our student enrollment is expected to increase by almost 200 children in the upcoming year. Our staff will also expand to meet the needs of our larger student population. We will build our new school community by focusing on our current strengths, reflecting on our past challenges, and looking ahead to a learning environment where all children recognize their potential.



## **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

Maria Hastings is a place where everyone learns and everyone belongs. These principles guide us through our everyday work. Our philosophy of education ensures that inclusion and student-centered learning are at the heart of every academic area. Teachers collaboratively analyze data to identify areas of strength, areas of need, and overall trends in the effectiveness of our instruction. Their subsequent instruction is purposeful, data-driven, and relevant to each individual learner. Educators ask thoughtful, open-ended questions, sending the message that they care about thinking deeply, looking for connections, and wondering about ideas rather than memorized, rapid recall. In every content area, there is a focus on practice standards, ensuring a balance between learning grade-level content and learning how to be a critical thinker, a problem solver, a reasoner, and a team member.

Using elements of a growth mindset, we have developed common language and understanding across schools in Lexington. All students hear the message that mistakes are a vital part of learning. Teachers understand that content needs to be rich and rigorous with opportunities for students to appropriately struggle, take risks, make mistakes, and persevere. We believe it is “process”, not “product” that needs to be celebrated and recognized. We engage in teaching practices that give students agency over their learning. Teachers increase wait time to give all students a chance to think. They use “raising a quiet thumb” in front of one’s body instead of waving a hand as a strategy that encourages reticent children to participate. Increasing student talk, while simultaneously decreasing teacher talk, gives all students the opportunity to speak and listen to peers. At Hastings, we engage in continuous professional development, as we strive to improve our teaching and better meet the needs of all our students in an inclusive environment.

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

Hastings implements Teachers College Reading and Writing Project’s Units of Study throughout the grades. Hastings embraces the Teachers College philosophy that students build independence from repeated practice of meaningful tasks to internalize literacy skills. Students benefit from frequent goal-setting, self-reflection, and self-assessment as they move toward proficiency.

One feature that makes the Units of Study lessons effective is the workshop structure for reading and writing. Teachers begin the lesson by articulating a clear teaching point as the focus for the day. After teachers model the day’s skill, students practice the skill through oral rehearsal with a peer or a quick jot in their notebooks. The bulk of each session is spent with students carrying the cognitive load and practicing skills appropriate for each person’s developmental level. Teachers circulate and adjust instruction particular to each student’s needs. Lessons conclude with a share during which students comment on the work of a peer, reflect on their own work, and engage in self-assessment. Environmental print displays adorn the room in the form of anchor charts and examples reinforce teaching points. Each unit is carefully constructed to guide students toward mastery of Massachusetts and Common Core Standards. Learning progressions appropriate to each grade accompany each unit, describing for teachers and students alike what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade. Units of Study return to the same themes across grade levels, giving students opportunities to deepen their understanding as they grow.

Teachers employ a range of strategies to meet the various student needs in their classrooms. They may convene small groups according to students’ needs, or they may choose to conference with individual students. Book groups are often leveled or interest-based, depending on the goals of the unit. Teachers at Hastings work closely with literacy specialists to match instruction to students’ learning needs. Literacy specialists coach teachers with professional support in the general education classroom and provide push-in and pull-out services based upon assessment data.

Routine formative and summative assessment data informs teachers’ instruction. Hastings utilizes Fountas NBRS 2020

and Pinnell's Benchmark Assessment System as the main form of pre-assessment and summative assessment data for reading at the beginning and end of each year. We use 'Words Their Way' inventories to inform our word study instruction. Additionally, Hastings administers AimswebPlus assessments in oral reading fluency and reading comprehension three times annually. Teachers may also use the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project's Running Record assessments as formative reading assessments throughout the year. In writing, on-demand writing gives teachers guidance as they launch a Unit of Study. End-of-unit essays and narratives serve as teachers' primary source of summative information. Each class period provides an opportunity for formative assessment as students practice their reading and writing skills, as well. Teachers utilize all of these data to inform and adjust daily instruction in the classroom, tailoring instruction to the needs of the students.

### **1c. Mathematics**

Our mathematics classrooms are filled with student discourse, problem-solving, hands-on learning, and reasoning. The curriculum is derived from multiple research-based sources, allowing teachers to utilize the best content and regularly adapt units to fit best practices. At every grade level, math lessons are created that embrace a "low floor, high ceiling" approach, allowing all students to gain confidence and engage with the problem at their own level of understanding.

Grade level specific pacing guides reflecting the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks help teachers navigate the curriculum throughout the year. All content is delivered with the focus of lessons spent on big ideas. Every grade level administers assessments to monitor student progress towards mastering the practices and content. In the primary grades, Kathy Richardson's Assessing Math Concepts (AMC) tools are utilized, as students progress through the foundational skills in number concepts. We set benchmarks throughout the year to help identify what students need in working towards the end of year standard. By analyzing student assessments, teachers develop interventions and targeted instruction for students not meeting benchmarks at various points in the year.

In third through fifth grade, teachers administer end of unit assessments to determine the effectiveness of their instruction. More importantly, educators frequently check student understanding during the unit by using formative assessments. In our school, mistakes are expected and valued. We want students to have opportunities to make mistakes, while also giving teachers opportunities to provide immediate feedback—that is the learning process! When students make complex, interesting mistakes, we know our curriculum has an appropriate amount of challenge and rigor.

During the 60-minute math block, all teachers implement a workshop model. Each math class begins with a brief minilesson, often supported by technology, where students spend time noticing, wondering, and making-sense of the math. At the end of the lesson, students or teachers summarize the big idea or teaching point. For the remainder of the math block, students engage in hands-on activities, games, technology, and independent tasks. Meanwhile, the teacher pulls small groups to provide instruction that meets their specific learning needs at both the challenge and supportive levels. To wrap up the block, the class gathers together to summarize the learning. Throughout the hour of math, students are expected to show their thinking using models, pictures, or diagrams: an example of "process" over "product." New concepts are developed through conceptual understanding rather than an application of rote procedures or memorization. Efficient strategies and fluency emerge after conceptual understanding is established, as students begin to demonstrate flexibility and stronger number sense.

Over the years, Hastings' educators have sought to change negative perceptions that are often associated with mathematics. Teachers welcome new routines and lessons because, ultimately, we share a vision where all students are excited about math. Through our curriculum, teaching practices, and workshop structure, we ensure that all students feel they have a voice in our classroom, and every student has important mathematical ideas to share.

## **1d. Science**

When entering a science classroom at Hastings, you will find students engaged with the Next Generation Science Standards to learn about science, technology, and engineering. We center all of our science lessons on a focus question that requires students to ask questions, observe, analyze, and interpret data, develop models, share findings, and engage in evidence-based arguments. Teachers lead students in standard-based lessons that align with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks to learn and apply content knowledge to the world around them.

With a focus on active engagement, science lessons include hands-on activities. For example, students learn about an animal's adaptations by bringing live animals into the classroom at almost every grade level. Students practice engineering by creating ice cube keepers and water filters. They stay up-to-date in our ever-changing world by learning to program EV3 robots. Regardless of the area of study, students construct explanations through conversations and document their thinking in science notebooks.

When students aren't busy learning about science inside the classroom, they are outside in our neighborhood learning about our school's environment and local ecosystems. Lexington's Big BackYard program invites parents to lead small group lessons in which students explore our schoolyard. These real-world experiences allow students to use and apply their content knowledge and learn about the environment that surrounds them.

Throughout each unit of study, teachers administer formative assessments that document student thinking and understanding of academic and performance standards. In addition, teachers collect data informally by evaluating diagrams and explanations in students' notebooks. These data are used to help inform teachers' delivery of instruction and individualize a student's learning experience. At the end of each unit, students participate in a summative assessment to show their knowledge and understanding of the content and practices.

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

When teaching social studies, we engage our students civically, historically, and geographically. We do this by teaching lessons that are designed around large concepts and big ideas. Teachers provide resources that enable students to dig deeply into the focus area rather than learning facts or insignificant details. Our curriculum fosters an in-depth study of content that incorporates civics, inquiry-based learning, and the inclusion of multiple perspectives. Teachers implement lessons designed by Lexington Public Schools that adhere to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Teachers utilize primary source documents and artifacts to engage students in inquiry-based lessons. One example is the use of historical information about Lexington during colonial times. Students are able to study specific families and visits historic sites in their community that bring the past to life for our learners. Employing open-ended questions, teachers lead students through an exploration of topics, such as how a community impacts a person's identity; how a person's geography influences how they live and the choices they make; and how different values and perspectives impact the movement of people. All of these topics build on the ideas of community, identity, and culture. In order to individualize instruction, teachers use a variety of performance-based assessments. Students demonstrate understanding through analyzing primary sources, conversing about a topic, completing individualized writing tasks, and creating unique projects using technology or the arts.

Regardless of grade level, Hastings teachers collaborate to design units that are centered on engaging questions. We work to provide opportunities for students to develop and answer their own questions, especially through the use of primary sources. Different viewpoints are included in everything we teach and students reflect on the variety of perspectives they encounter in their studies. Hastings teachers strive to create meaningful learning experiences that encourage critical thinking and foster lifelong citizenship.

## **1f. For secondary schools:**

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

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Beyond the core academic areas, Hastings teachers focus on additional curricula that support a well-rounded experience for our students. Every student engages in art, music, physical education, and library/media on a weekly basis. All fifth-grade students are members of the 5th-grade chorus and deliver several lively performances throughout the year.

In addition, students are able to select instrumental music lessons taught at school. Roughly 75% of students in fourth grade and 63% of fifth-graders participate in the instrumental music program. Aside from chorus and instruments, our building offers other platforms for students to demonstrate their many talents. Every other week, all students and staff come together for an All School Meeting. These gatherings offer students and entire classrooms a chance to display their hard work through song, artwork, instruments, plays/skits, and other demonstrations. At our student-led All School Meeting in January, a second-grade classroom shared posters that depicted their dreams in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. During the March All School Meeting, a second and fifth-grade classroom partnered to sing a goodbye song to our old school, as we moved into a brand new building. Another platform available to students to share their passions is the yearly talent show. This event brings the community together to celebrate the array of talents ranging from singing, dancing, joke-telling, and acrobatics. Perhaps one of the most exciting events that have become integral to Hastings' school culture is the yearly, fifth-grade musical. All fifth graders participate in the production in various roles, including acting, set crew, prop management, sound production, lighting management, and ensemble.

Students acquire other essential skills and knowledge from the social-emotional curriculum and structures that are integral to our program. All classrooms have a block of time dedicated to social-emotional learning. During this time students engage in lessons around regulating their emotions and building friendships, resolving conflicts, and executive functioning skills. Another social and emotional support is the mentoring program for students who may benefit from positive adult interactions and relationship-building. Mentors and mentees meet weekly to talk, play games, or engage in a variety of arts and crafts. These interactions offer students a relationship with adults other than their classroom teacher, promoting a sense of self-confidence in our children. Another way in which students form relationships with peers and teachers outside of their classroom is through "Buddy Classes." Bimonthly, older students partner with younger students to read, play, serve the community, or celebrate their accomplishments. The structure provides an opportunity for older students to be role models for their "buddies," giving younger children a student mentor to emulate.

Technology is viewed as a tool for learning at Hastings. Our technology coaches, in collaboration with the library/media specialist, have created digital learning labs. During this block of time, students learn digital citizenship and how best to use the Internet and social media. Students also learn about technology through our electronic databases, allowing learners to research topics using trusted sources of information. Students apply this knowledge when researching different areas of interest. Lastly, students use technology to engage in coding programs such as Hour of Code, Scratch Jr., Lightbot, and Kodable. These educational experiences prepare students for the skills necessary to be successful in the 21st century. The building is equipped with interactive whiteboards, document cameras, and speech enhancement systems that increase access for all students.

Hastings also provides many educational opportunities beyond the school day. The annual parent coordinated Science Fair gives students experience with developing a hypothesis, researching information, and conducting experiments. Students share their findings with scientists from the community. Another exciting school-wide event is the Art Show. Student pieces are selected from art class and displayed in the building, allowing children's visual arts skills to be celebrated. Finally, one of our most cherished events is the multicultural potluck. This event invites our many different cultures to be represented through music, traditional clothing, displays of families' cultures, and international cuisine. The evening showcases the variety of cultures in our community and fosters an environment in which everyone feels welcomed, included, and valued.

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

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

Students working below grade level are provided with double doses of instruction varying in frequency or intensity and tailored to their individual needs. The staff includes math and literacy coaches who consult with classroom teachers, review classroom and normed assessments, identify specific needs, offer small group and individual instruction, and monitor student progress. The coaches work in the general education classroom whenever appropriate to encourage carryover to the learning that takes place throughout the day. They provide separate sessions when the child's needs are more effectively met in a different setting. Literacy coaches have training in phonics lessons, Reading Recovery, Leveled Literacy Instruction, Fountas and Pinnell, and Teachers College Units of Study in Reading and Writing. Their collaboration with classroom teachers, English Language Learner specialists, special educators, counselors, and building leaders ensures that students receive comprehensive support at their level of need and in a timely manner. Technology is also a learning tool used to engage children and individualize their instruction. Hastings structures the Response to Intervention (RtI) process to bring all educators involved with a grade level together over the course of the year to plan, deliver, and assess instruction for specific student needs. Data enable teacher teams to flexibly group students for short-term, focused interventions and engage in ongoing progress monitoring. Our commitment to closing the achievement gap permeates all we do across all settings. Focusing on students for whom the achievement gap is typically the greatest (i.e., students of color, economically disadvantaged students, English Language Learners, and students with identified special needs), teachers continue to build their instructional repertoire, along with their understanding of each child's experiences. Our focus this year on Zaretta Hammond's book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching*, and the *Brain* helps us better understand the impact of culture in learning systems and how educators can foster independent learning through culturally responsive instruction.

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

By delving deeper into units of study in core academic areas, teachers differentiate lessons for children working above grade level. Using the Practice Standards in a given content area as a starting point, teachers write challenges focused on inquiry questions and big ideas. Students are asked to research, experiment, read, write, and discuss information and ideas in order to answer questions or apply knowledge to a new problem. Heterogeneous groups of students work together, enabling children to learn from peers with a range of skills. For students working above grade-level standards, teachers generate learning tasks that require additional critical thinking and application.

Teachers also integrate a student's unique passion into a unit of study, bringing a child's expertise to the center of a lesson so that students become teachers of their peers, building self-confidence and generating excitement among classmates about new topics. In math classrooms, children receive challenge journals that push them beyond simply solving more rigorous problems. These journals encourage students to represent their thinking in a variety of ways: through modeling, drawing, writing, and collaborating with peers. We view content as the vehicle for skill development, and we often find that reflection and metacognition are far more challenging for our students than the math content itself. When our students internalize the mathematical habits of mind, we know we have done our jobs. Furthermore, many of our math activities embed varying levels of differentiation, so all learners can participate at their "just-right" Vygotskian level and experience productive struggle. Technology is used as a tool to promote student ownership of content learning. Students access Google Classroom to create slideshows, videos, and greenscreen projects that are shared with classmates. Children have strengths in different areas, and we celebrate those strengths by offering "challenge assignments" to all learners, with the goal of stretching their thinking and encouraging their growth.

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

Across both moderate and intensive special education programs at Hastings, inclusion in the general education setting is a hallmark. Some classroom teachers co-teach literacy and math with special educators in order to support student learning in the least restrictive environment. We currently support 51 students

with moderate special needs. Moderate Special Educators have training in Orton Gillingham reading instruction, Foundations word study programs, and Do the Math and STmath programs. They teach executive functioning and self-regulation skills through the SMARTS curriculum, the Social Thinking program, and the Zones of Regulation. Often these lessons begin in the general education setting, creating consistency for all adults and children. Speech/language pathologists and occupational therapists use a rotating schedule to provide three weeks of pullout services and one week of in-class support to promote generalization of skills.

Hastings also provides special education services for 33 students through our district-wide Intensive Learning Program (ILP). Our ILP students have profiles on the autism spectrum or specific pragmatic language needs and are integrated into general education classrooms for large portions of the day. The focus on social language development is critical, with assistants balancing support for children while promoting independence in social and academic situations. ILP students participate in a weekly one-hour social skills group co-taught by a special educator and speech/language pathologist. One unique aspect of the Intensive Learning Program is the ongoing professional development for Specialized Instructional Assistants. They meet monthly with the BCBA and other educators to deepen their understanding of the students' profiles and effective facilitation of students' access to the curriculum. ILP planning meetings are held regularly with families to offer updates regarding the academic and social/emotional needs of the student.

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

The Hastings School has over 70 students for whom English is a second language. Families speak 28 languages beyond English in their homes. Support from classroom and ELL teachers is crucial to the child's level of confidence with a new language and the family's level of comfort acclimating to a new culture and educational system. Teachers organize instruction based upon the children's level of English proficiency and need in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Our three-person ELL team works in classrooms with students at a higher level of English proficiency who benefit from vocabulary language skill development and in reading and writing.

Our ELL teachers meet with their district colleagues regularly to exchange best practices and support one another. Additionally, they facilitate adult learning for staff that focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion in our schools. ELL teachers also meet with small groups, matching instruction to student need and employing the content used in the general education setting to build proficiency in English. One example of specific small group instruction was initiated by a need for support in mathematics. The ELL teachers conducted focussed planning with our math coach to integrate math content into their sessions. Specifically targeting second and third-grade students, wordless number problems have been used to deepen children's understanding of number sense in math stories before practicing computation. We have an active district-wide ELL Parent Advisory Committee, and our ELL teachers have offered parent meetings throughout the year to encourage open communication between school and home. They maintain an ELL website linked to the Hastings homepage that contains resources for parents and students, as well as grade-level updates of content and skills taught in ELL classes. The website link includes an embedded translation feature, making it more accessible to all families.

**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:**

Hastings is firmly committed to fostering an environment where our children feel they belong and are valued members of the community. From the moment they enter the building to the time they depart, students are surrounded by friendly, compassionate adults whose smiles, questions, and conversations communicate their care for the wellbeing of each child.

Teachers demonstrate the school’s devotion to diversity, equity, and inclusion through their use of resources and media, reflecting our diverse student body. From a diverse literacy library to a progressive curriculum that honors the voices of multiple perspectives, Hastings provides an education that strives to help every child feel represented. Events such as a “Multicultural Potluck” and parent-led learning sessions provide opportunities for students to showcase their own cultures, values, and beliefs, as well as learn about the cultural practices of their peers.

A cornerstone of the positive culture at Hastings is our bi-weekly, student-led All-School Meeting. The meetings begin by singing our Hastings School song which includes the line, “Everyone learns and everyone belongs.” Fifth-grade students take turns writing the script and leading All School Meeting. They introduce the sharings, compliment the participants, and announce upcoming school events. The atmosphere is consistently positive and celebratory. On the remaining Fridays, classes meet with their buddies. The whole school celebrates with spirit days when the school meets its goal for a Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) reward.

Hastings’ robust Social-Emotional Learning curriculum is a core facet of our whole-child approach to teaching and learning. The schoolwide implementation of Responsive Classroom’s approach to Morning Meetings, Closing Circles, and rules and routines are the foundation of the day. Each classroom has a designated “calming” space equipped with strategies for self-regulation and de-escalation. Hastings also provides a student mentoring program that pairs students in need of a confidence boost or positive role model with an adult in the building. Hastings’ commitment to supporting each child’s social and emotional wellbeing is fueled by the rapport built between the mentors and mentees, leading to our students’ ever-increasing success.

Project-based learning, open-ended prompts, and an emphasis on critical thinking characterize the curricular units at Hastings. Students have multiple opportunities to shine throughout the year, particularly in the fifth grade musical, the fourth-grade robotics unit, kindergarten celebrations of the 100th day of school, and the third-grade biography museum.

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

Our highly supportive parent community dedicates thousands of volunteer hours each year, building strong connections between school and home. Parents organize many annual events including a non-competitive Science Fair, Visual Arts Night, the Harvest Run/Walk, Multicultural Dinner and Learning Fair, Field Day, and Student Talent Show. Typically, hundreds of children participate, bringing multiple generations of their family to the celebrations.

Parent volunteers are critical to the success of our Big Backyard program in which students participate in outdoor science walks led by trained parent volunteers. <sup>(SEP)</sup>Parents volunteer to help in the library so the library/media specialist can focus on helping students select books and learn to love literacy. Teachers invite parents to share their culture, to be a “guest reader,” or to celebrate the students’ academic accomplishments.

The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) welcomes new families by offering links with current households. They hold meetings designed to inform the community about educational topics of interest. The PTO allocates funds for school-based enrichment activities, such as the visit by a cartographer to third-grade classrooms studying maps. Hastings parents participate in the Special Education Parent Advisory Council to

work proactively together and discuss issues that arise for their children. ELL families are invited to school several times yearly to learn about the practices in the Lexington schools. Each fall the counselors facilitate a workshop for kindergarten parents to build a positive relationship between home and school and offer strategies for guiding children at the start of elementary school.

For the past three years, the Hastings School community has been involved in the design and construction of a new building. After leading a campaign to raise local property taxes to fund the facility, parents joined in the design process. At the start of the project, the architects brought parents and teachers together to establish stakeholder priorities. Parents provided input on the design of community spaces and on the color selection and on the playground design. Families joined students in creating a mosaic that celebrates our diversity, with the help of a local artist. The beautiful mosaic adorns the front entrance of our new school and symbolizes the unity of our school community. This Spring, Hastings welcomes families from across Lexington as students are redistricted and the community expands. Existing Hastings families are collaborating to ensure that new families feel comfortable and excited about joining our community.

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

At Hastings School, the motto, “Everyone learns and everyone belongs,” applies to both children and adults. All Hastings staff members are encouraged to continue to expand their professional skill set. Coaching cycles are scheduled for teachers to collaborate with a coach in math or literacy. During six-week cycles, teachers focus on one area of their practice they want to improve through the modeling and guidance of a coach. Coaches and teachers continue meeting as needed after the cycle ends in order to continue the learning process. The master schedule for the school provides at least one hour weekly for grade-level teams to conduct Professional Learning Communities (PLC). PLC’s develop goals, collect and analyze student work, and create across classroom groups to provide targeted interventions for challenge tasks or additional support.

Another opportunity for professional development occurs on Thursdays when students are released early. Thursday afternoons allow teachers to participate in learning opportunities on a variety of topics delivered by department heads, instructional coaches, technology specialists, mental health specialists, and outside consultants. Thursdays are used for break-out sessions where teachers share effective strategies with colleagues, collaborate with support teachers to analyze data, plan differentiated lessons, and share instructional resources. Time set aside every week for professional development contributes to a strong professional culture, where all educators are able to continue learning and growing their practice.

Hastings continuously encourages teachers to seek professional development within the district, as well as beyond it. The district has an online course catalog that includes many opportunities for all staff cohorts to take courses given by teachers in the district, local colleges, or other professional organizations. Most of the courses offered are free for Lexington employees, making them accessible for all staff members. If a course is not currently offered, teachers may request permission to enroll in a program outside of the district and may be eligible for reimbursement for their participation.

Hastings and the Lexington Public Schools have made it their mission to make professional development readily accessible to all their employees. Hourly staff are included in professional development opportunities, and teachers are encouraged to engage in these beneficial opportunities as well as to seek out their own. This culture is modeled by the administration, further encouraging teacher interest and commitment to self-reflection and professional growth.

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

Hastings is led by a four-person team: the Principal, Assistant Principal, and two Evaluation Team Supervisors. Although the Principal is generally charged with final responsibility for school-wide decisions, she highly values teamwork and believes that candid and thoughtful dialogue leads to consensus-building and understanding of outcomes. All four leaders collaborate to complete the supervision and evaluation process with professional growth being the priority.



Hastings has a number of teams tasked with overseeing school planning and decision-making. Hastings uses a Child Study Team model for specific student case studies prior to recommending any formal evaluation. This team includes a cross-section of teachers (e.g. classroom, literacy, speech, counseling) who work with the Assistant Principal to develop a plan for addressing individual student needs and review progress over time. The Multidisciplinary Team meets weekly with a focus on children and families who require counseling services at school or other emotional supports beyond the school. Hastings School also has a staff Equity Team that has engaged in Restorative Justice training, workshops on implicit bias, and culturally responsive teaching. The Equity Team serves as a leadership group in sharing their learning with colleagues through professional learning sessions. Hastings also has a School Site Council, including parents, community members, and school leaders. This advisory group provides input on the school goals, assists in budget reviews, and serves as advocates in the greater community when needed. The school further benefits from a highly active and supportive Parent Teacher Organization which encourages participation by all stakeholders.

Teacher leadership is promoted through opportunities to plan and lead professional learning, facilitate meetings, and write grants for continued learning in their field. Many Hastings teachers have completed leadership training and are certified as school administrators. The leadership program includes a year-long internship with weekly discussions regarding the many aspects of building leadership. By articulating how a decision was made and seeking the interns' input, their fresh ideas for leading the school generate change and inspire colleagues. Students also take on leadership roles organically when they bring a personal passion, often in the form of a community service project they spearhead, a special talent they want to share, or an idea for school improvement they want to realize. Students are mentored by Hastings staff in order to bring their ideas to fruition.

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

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While many factors contribute to the excellence of Hastings, the one practice that has been the most instrumental to our success is inclusion. Our staff is committed to inclusion for all learners through continuous collaboration with colleagues. Our co-teaching model is well established and robust in many classrooms. The general education teacher and the co-teaching colleague meet weekly to plan instruction. With the classroom teacher's expertise in the grade-level curriculum and the ELL or special educator's skills in adapting content to enhance access for students with a wide range of needs, teachers integrate their fund of knowledge on behalf of all students' learning. This collaboration also includes the mental health staff who enter classrooms to co-teach lessons addressing students' social/emotional needs. One example is the "skin color project" in which the school counselor visited all general education classrooms to read *Sulwe* by Lupita Nyong'o and complete an art project in which the students mixed paint to find the "recipe" for their unique skin color. Students work collaboratively in groups that capitalize on each member's strengths and support others in areas of need. Turn and talks, think-pair-shares, and other similar structures place student-centered learning at the core of our instruction, illustrating the belief that everyone has important ideas and a voice that matters.

The multi-year planning and construction of a new building has been another opportunity for us to demonstrate our inclusive mindset through the physical plant. There are many aspects of Universal Design for Learning evident in the new school. The playground includes a buddy bench and musical instruments in the design which gives students options beyond physical activity to engage in play with peers. All classrooms have a speech amplification system, multiple standing desks, and calming areas. Classrooms share a project area that offers break out spaces for small group learning. Our Intensive Learning Program and our English Language Learners program have classrooms on each floor, and there are small breakout spaces, allowing students to receive specialized instruction close to their general education classroom. Every floor includes one gender-neutral, single student, bathroom. At Hastings, the saying "Everyone Learns and Everyone Belongs" permeates our physical environment, our teaching and learning, and our social/emotional support for students, their families, and our professional community.